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On 'Academia'

Professor Murray Rothbard's "Letter From Academia," (Correspondence, September 1991) begins on a Swiftian tone, but ends disastrously. We learn from the last paragraph that the trouble with our universities is the lack of a "reality check," in other words, that they are not run on the private, profit-making enterprise model. I have always thought, naively after forty years of teaching, that the trouble is the abysmal quality of American education *at all levels*, the impressive ignorance of 99 percent of the teachers and professors, and the exclusive business orientation of our institutions of "higher learning." As a colleague now returned from teaching in Budapest, where I am now heading, told me, the worst student there is still better than the best at Harvard. Let's keep both capitalism and socialism out of this matter.

—Thomas Molnar
Ridgewood, NJ

Mr. Rothbard Replies:

Please, Professor Molnar: I was offering some reminiscences on a life in academe, not trying to set forth a treatise on the decline of the American educational system. But I do think that a crucial reason for that decline is the nationalization of American education in the 20th century. I daresay that the best at Harvard is also worse than the average American high school graduate of a century ago. The problem is scarcely "business orientation." As a friend of mine observed during the New Left troubles, "no one sits in at Berlitz." I am sure that such market-oriented institutions as Berlitz or the various secretarial schools are quite competent at what they do. True, they do not turn out intellectual giants, but not the least of their viruses is that they don't pretend to do so. I remember that some years ago, a former student at my alma mater, Columbia University, sued the school for not imparting the "wisdom" it had offered in its catalog. While the suit was of course thrown out as frivolous, I think the kid had a point.

Actually, the best discussion of the decline of American education was published long ago, in the mid-1930's, in a wonderful little book of lectures by Albert Jay Nock, *The Theory of Education in the United States*. Nock pointed out that the conservatives of the day who were focusing their fire on John Dewey and progressive education for such courses as drivers' ed were missing the mark. The central problem, Nock pointed out, was the peculiarly modern American axiom—indirectly allied to statism—of mass education: that every kid in America is entitled to a college degree. Once this axiom is adopted, all the rest—collapse of standards, drivers' ed, lowest-common-denominator education, etc.—follow as the night does the day. Fortunately, education in Europe continues to be "elitist" in the best sense. But if present egalitarian and mass education trends proceed in Europe, I fear that eventually even Professor Molnar's beloved Budapest may succumb.

—Murray N. Rothbard

On 'Mary Gordon'

J.O. Tate's review of Mary Gordon's "writings" ("Feminist Fatale," September 1991) provided comic relief when sorely needed. I laughed out loud at his deft phrases, and giggles threaten to erupt when I recall it.

I've never actually "read" Mary Gordon; I tried to once, I really did. I bought a battered paperback copy of one of her novels at a surplus-book library sale for a dime, and yes, at that price it was a waste of money. On the premise of "Know Thy Enemy," I settled down doggedly to read it—dog being the operative word—but after a few chapters, the little men in the Literary Control Room became upset and expressed their supreme dissatisfaction at such fare by walking off the job. After rather delicate negotia-

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tions, where I had to promise them Dickens, Chesterton, Wodehouse, and even a little Shakespeare just to induce them to consider going back to work, an agreement was finally reached, and I am happy to report they are once again in full production churning through Mr. Pickwick, Father Brown, Jeeves, and Falstaff. Both parties are relieved a prolonged strike was avoided, and I have been reminded in no uncertain terms of their slogan: "Life is short; bilge is long; hell, no, we won't read it."

Thank you, Mr. Tate, for showing me what I *haven't* missed.

—*Windi Carnes*
Lakemont, GA

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS

PATRICK J. BUCHANAN had not even formally announced his candidacy for the White House last November than a platoon of the Beltway right suddenly fell out of ranks to denounce him and his challenge to George Bush. Divisive, polarizing, protectionist, nativist, xenophobic, anti-Zionist, anti-Semitic, ultra-nationalist, racist were the predictable sobriquets that buzzed from their muzzles.

Abe Rosenthal immediately compared Mr. Buchanan to David Duke and urged the organization of the same kind of national boycott against him and his supporters that had been launched so effectively against Louisiana. Neoconservative Charles Krauthammer joined the chorus soon after in a column shuddering with fear over what he called Mr. Buchanan's "ravings" of the last couple of years.

Why was this so? Why, with George Bush sinking in the polls and perhaps unlikely to keep the White House next year, were the Beltway right and its friends on the left so frightened of a challenge to the mollescent ooze seeping from the executive mansion that may wash the White House out of Republican hands for the first time in 12 years? Not only has Mr. Buchanan never worn an arm band or a bed sheet, but he happens to be perhaps the most popular political columnist in the United States, the publisher of one of the country's fastest growing newsletters, and a ubiquitous star on nationally broadcast talk shows. The normal response from conservatives, it would seem, would be to welcome Mr. Buchanan's campaign as at least a useful splint to keep Mr. Bush connected to the right wing of his party.

There is a simple reason for the shrill denunciations Mr. Buchanan received from his supposed allies: he is too popular.

It is not that his success excites personal jealousy among less talented and less articulate conservative spokesmen, but rather that what he offers is something that few if any of the others have. Unlike almost every other major figure or organization of the American right today, Mr. Buchanan has not achieved his eminence as a result of tax-exempt foundations, a government job, grants from HUD and the education department, or handouts from fat cats. Mr. Buchanan has been successful—indeed, become wealthy and famous—doing precisely what professional conservatives always talk about but don't always practice. He has offered a product—his insights and viewpoints on public affairs—and a national market for that product finds it irresistible.

This is not simply a tribute to his skills as a salesman but points to something else. Pat Buchanan is a real person. He really believes certain things and really doesn't believe certain others, and he really says what he believes and doesn't believe. He pulls no punches, and he doesn't have to pull them precisely because he is independent of the conservative hive that flourishes in Washington and New York.

By contrast, what the members of the hive say and do is largely determined by what is expedient for the organizations they represent. Their articles, columns, magazines, and books are carefully plotted media events, engineered by public relations firms and reinforced by the other hiveites. Every year or so, they crank out more lightweight tomes on economics, education, culture, or foreign policy, contrive to have their friends review them and boom them and sit back and enjoy the limelight their contributions to scholarship emit. But within another year, their efforts have proved perishable, and you're lucky if you can locate them on the remaindered shelves of secondhand bookstores.

After a steady stream of Big Mac conservatism, anyone who serves a real hamburger is not going to be welcome, and that is exactly what Mr. Buchanan offers: not the monosodium glutamate of neoconservatism and the soft right but the muscular protein for which Americans outside the Beltway are starving.

If Mr. Buchanan is smart—and we think he's very smart—he'll ignore the chirpings of the Beltway hive and keep on serving up what Americans and America need. The rabbit food of

Janusz Kapusta

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global democracy, Big Government conservatism, unlimited free trade and immigration, and perpetual war for perpetual nonpeace are what's on the menu of the soft right, but no one's going to order it, much less swallow it.

The issues Mr. Buchanan should and probably will address have to do not with the cerebrations of think tanks and the preferences of institutional cash cows, but with the real concerns, interests, and beliefs of real Americans: the economic destruction of the American middle class by the leakage of jobs, plants, and technologies abroad; the cultural deracination of American civilization and education by literally millions of illegal and undocumented aliens and their allies in powerful political lobbies, bureaucracies, and universities; the grotesque injustice of affirmative action, quotas, set-asides and all the other phony therapies by which a ravenous and irresponsible underclass clamors for power and privilege; the corruption of our public life by the entrenched congressional oligarchy and its incestuous sibling in the executive branch bureaucracy; the frivolous frittering away of national sovereignty and national power in foreign aid and American troops for thankless "allies" and dubious neutrals.

Conservatives in the post-Reagan era don't even recognize most of these crises and threats as real problems, let alone the mortal wounds to our national identity and interests that they are, and when someone emerges who does see them and wants to heal them, his admonitions are denounced as "ravings" by the very claque that purports to want to "conserve" America and its heritage.

Labels like "conservatism" and "liberalism," "left" and "right," have no meaning anymore because they have been hijacked by frauds who use them only to deceive and dissimulate instead of to communicate and lead. Away with these baubles and those who play with them. Let real Americans lead the real America.

—*Samuel Francis*

CONGRESS, said H.L. Mencken, or perhaps it was Will Rogers, cost him about twelve dollars a year in taxes to support the institution, which was an unmatched bargain for entertainment. The statement was made during the raucous 20's, when things seemed to be going along pretty well, and the antics of our leaders did not usually result in inescapable and intolerable burdens. Congress, of course, costs a lot more today. Will Rogers was lost in 1935 and Mencken about the same time gave up political reporting for other interests. The whole thing has become a lot less funny, but we might as well get what enjoyment we can out of it—that's all the benefit we will get.

They are all funny, politicians, but perhaps the funniest are the establishment conservatives, who will provide us with many occasions for hilarity during the coming presidential campaign. The last time, during the Republican National Convention, they stridently demanded attention and representation. They got Dan Quayle, whom Bush and the media immediately identified as theirs, though most of them had never heard of him. Their one big payoff turned out to be a liability.

Probably the most amusing part of the whole campaign will be watching Bush, whose affirmative action quota bill was barely distinguishable from the Democrats' affirmative action quota bill, pose as the antiquota hero.

The knee-jerk conservatives rallied to the defense of Judge Clarence Thomas in the same fashion, because he was denominated the conservative candidate, though no one has ever explained whether or why this is actually so. They declared their determination not to allow Judge Thomas to be "borked." But this is silly. Bork was a serious scholar who would have intellectually remolded federal jurisprudence. That is why he had to be defeated. There is no evidence that Thomas will provide anything to the Court except a correct vote now and then, if even that is certain. Something thousands of potential nominees could do, and many of them better. Liberals put up a token opposition to Thomas, but they know they really have little to fear.

Further, if we are to take Thomas seriously in his intellectual positions, he is a "higher law" philosopher, something which is more alien and potentially more dangerous to what is left of our constitutional patrimony than even the fulminations of Justice Brennan. Let us hope we don't have to take it seriously. It is reported that Thomas's "higher law" writings were ghosted by a disciple of Professor Harry Jaffa, allegedly the author of the famous speech in praise of extremism that cost Barry Goldwater ten million votes.

But perhaps the establishment conservatives are not as dumb as I think. Maybe it is a fact that few of them have enough base to get reelected without the assistance of presidential glamour, since we now have an imperial rather than a representative government. That would explain why, except for Jesse Helms, none of them ever oppose their President, though the liberal Republicans do so whenever they want.

As one who spent an embattled youth as a "conservative" inside the academy, I feel I have earned the right to laugh at what "conservatism" has become. One must either laugh or cry.

And, of course, we can always fall back on the dubious consolation that the Democrats are worse. The Republicans have betrayed their middle-class constituency at every turn, which makes them ripe for revolt. But the Democrats are incapable of disengaging themselves from weirdness long enough to make any political capital out of it. Or perhaps they don't want to. Actually, the division of power between the Republican President and the Democratic congressional leadership, who disagree about nothing significant, makes the perfect arrangement for the imperial state. The most normal and logical thing for the Democrats to do is to nominate Bush for the presidency, in which case they would win the election—and get rid of Dan Quayle in the bargain.

It is impossible to find intellectual and ethical bankruptcy any greater than the turn the Democrats have taken on the Bush-Solarz war in the Persian Gulf. A great many voted against it, but now that it is over and popular, all we hear is the plaintive cry that they were not unpatriotic, they just wanted more time for the sanctions to work. I would submit that there is political capital to be made even yet out of honest criticism of the war—the cost in blood and treasure, the confused and dubious goals, the exposure of military technology that would have

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been better saved for a more important occasion. There remains something inherently foolish—and tragic—about using an artillery battery to kill a rat, a rat that was half dead already. But political capital totally aside, criticism of the war, now that the action is over, would be, for a principled opposition party, the right thing to do, which is why it will never happen.

And truly, if the Democrats had any spirit, any integrity, any faith in their own convictions, they would nominate for Bush's opponent the Reverend Jesse Jackson, who is far and away their most articulate, most charming, and most sincere leader. But this, of course, they will never do. Jackson at least has had the guts and the patriotism to complain about the loss of family farms and the shipment of American blue-collar jobs offshore—something no leading Republican has had the integrity to do, as far as I know.

Watch Jackson when the cameras go in close. He is a real human being—one who has suffered and thought. (I write completely without irony.) Though he is sometimes half-baked in his solutions—what leading politician isn't—he speaks from the heart about real problems, and once he has taken up an idea he does not retreat just because it's unpopular. That is, unlike Bush, he really represents his constituency. Allowing for differences of style, he is in no rationally describable sense any more of a demagogue than Bush—and a lot more sincere. Beside him Bush looks like a preppie, and the other Democratic presidential contenders like pyramid scheme salesmen.

—*Clyde Wilson*

BASEBALL is reportedly replete with racism. Apparently concentrating on the World Series-bound Atlanta Braves was not enough for the *Atlanta Constitution*, for it came to the conclusion late last summer that the "White Game Is Alienating Many Blacks." The white game? The problem, said the newspaper, is that while black players are a satisfying 72 percent of the NBA and an OK 61 percent of the NFL, they are "only" 18 percent of Major League Baseball. Worse, only 6 percent of the fans are black.

The answer? Affirmative action, of course. Ball clubs, starting with the Atlanta Braves, were consequently being asked to recruit black fans, in part with cheaper tickets than whites can buy. And black players should be paid higher salaries than whites to raise that "low" 18 percent figure. Why the "under-representation" of blacks in baseball? Montreal Expos scouting director Gary Hughes said, "You just don't go play baseball. It's not enough to be naturally gifted like track or football. To be honest, I don't know how many black kids are willing to work hard enough at it to excel."

Racism! said Richard Lapchick, director of the Center for the Study of Sports in Society at Northeastern University. "That sounds typical of the stereotype that studies show have long been held about blacks: that they're too lazy, they can't swim, and they are innately less intelligent." But black Detroit Tigers farm club player Eric Mangham, who played high school ball near Atlanta, agreed with Hughes. "Baseball is a complex game. Football is a game of strength, but baseball requires certain fundamentals, like hitting the cutoff man. Baseball is totally different from the rest of sports." Most black kids, he notes, prefer the "action" of basketball and football. As to the black attendance, the UCLA School of Management, which did a study for Major League Baseball, said that many clubs don't recruit black fans because "too many" would scare away whites.

Not that everyone has worried about black attendance. In 1978, former Minnesota Twins owner Calvin Griffin told the Lions Club in Waseca, Minnesota, that he moved his team from Washington, D.C., to Minnesota when he "found out that you only had 15,000 blacks here. Blacks don't go to baseball games."

—*Llewellyn H. Rockwell, Jr.*

Principalities & Powers

by Samuel Francis

The Education of David Duke

The time has come, to paraphrase Caspar Gutman in Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*, for plain speaking and clear understanding. Last November, David Duke failed to win the governorship of Louisiana, but he did gain some 39 percent of the popular vote and carried a majority—about 55 percent—of the white vote. What defeated Mr. Duke was not the "baggage" of his background as a Nazi and a Klansman but rather the unprecedented campaign in the press against him and the concerted efforts of businessmen, union officials, church leaders, politicians of both parties, and ideological malcontents of every description to vilify him and to threaten the state and people of Louisiana with retaliation if they dared to break from the political molds crafted for them.

For at least two solid weeks before the election, newspapers far from Louisiana as well as within it delved sedulously into Mr. Duke's background and statements since high school. On election day, organizers literally combed the streets of New Orleans looking for blacks to go to the polls to vote against him. The President and Vice-President of the United States denounced him, as did several leading conservative spokesmen. If virtually any other politician in this country had excited the fear and hatred Mr. Duke inspired, not only would he have lost the election with far less than 39 percent of the vote but his career would have been ruined. What the actual election results teach is that Mr. Duke's support, while not a majority of voters, was deep, broad, and intense.

Despite Mr. Duke's defeat, it is possible that future historians will look

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back on the Louisiana gubernatorial election of 1991 as a turning point in American history. Democrats and liberals have spent the last year whining that Duke represents the logical culmination of the conservative resurgence of Ronald Reagan, and conservatives, for the most part, have spent an equal amount of time denying it. The Democrats and liberals are, for once, dead right, though as usual they miss the point. Reagan conservatism, in its innermost meaning, had little to do with supply-side economics and spreading democracy. It had to do with the awakening of a people who face political, cultural, and economic dispossession, who are slowly beginning to glimpse the fact of dispossession and what dispossession will mean for them and their descendants, and who also are starting to think about reversing the processes and powers responsible for their dispossession. Ever since Mr. Reagan marched off to Washington in 1980 with the votes, money, and confidence of the Americans who supported him, that meaning has been systematically thwarted, manipulated, and suppressed, not least by the very professional conservatives who have gained from it and purport to represent it. Mr. Duke and his voters are simply telling them that that meaning endures and that they intend to make certain it survives, even if it takes an ex-Nazi to do it.

The mainstream of American conservatism in the 1990's has a lot of problems with that message, and the first fact such conservatives have to recognize is that Mr. Duke's performance means that mainstream conservatism is politically defunct. In the gubernatorial primary in October, Mr. Duke defeated incumbent Governor Buddy Roemer, a Democrat who had switched to the Republicans last year. Mr. Roemer was supposed to be the early swallow that brings a GOP spring, but nobody ever thought he was a paradigmatic conservative. The other loser in the primary, however, was Representative Clyde Holloway, who was such a paradigm, and he was booted so badly by all the other candidates that many newspapers didn't even bother to report the few votes he received. Mr. Holloway, the favorite of mainstream conservative organs such as *Human Events* and *National Review*, actually was the official Republican nominee, and conservatives who began to deplore Mr. Duke have only their own candidate to thank for Mr. Duke's success. Had it not been for Mr. Holloway's candidacy, most of his votes in the primary would probably have gone to Mr. Roemer, and Mr. Duke would not have been eligible for the runoff.

Louisiana is not exactly Massachusetts, and a "principled conservative," as movement conservatives like to call candidates like Mr. Holloway, should have been expected to do better. He didn't, even though there was nothing at all wrong with him, and his dismal showing is an obituary for the kind of issues mainstream conservatives have long espoused. Nor is there anything wrong with those issues, which are centered on small and limited government and free market economic policies, except that they belong to a different era and can no longer be expected to win votes as they often did in the 1970's. Moreover, the handling of such issues by the Reagan administration and by President Bush has been such as not to inspire confidence among voters supportive of them that other Republicans will handle them any better.

Mr. Duke, of course, bends his knees to such issues in his effort to present himself as a conservative Republican, but everyone knows they are not the reason for his appeal. The conservative issues not only belong to a different era of American politics but also reflect a different kind of society. They are essentially bourgeois issues and mirror the social and moral codes of the small, independent businessman, his family, and his community. Once upon a time, such entrepreneurs were the dominant core of American culture and politics, but they are so no longer, and with their demise, the appeal of their ideology has withered.

The second fact that American conservatives have to recognize about Mr. Duke is that, through the issues by which he did appeal to voters, he has successfully redefined the ideological pivots around which American politics revolves. Those issues, of course, are racial, though not in the sense that Mr. Duke's most vocal enemies claim.

Mr. Duke did not win his state legislature seat or come close to winning a Senate seat in 1990 or approach winning the governorship last year by catering to racial hatred, promising to restore segregation, or mounting esoteric arguments about IQ scores and how many Jews died at Auschwitz. For some years prior to his national emergence, he had campaigned precisely on such issues, and he lost disastrously. For the last couple of years, however, Mr. Duke has abandoned his racialist and Nazi noises and espoused a platform that, while rather narrow, is formally and explicitly unobjectionable from a mainstream conservative point of view and is arguable even from a moderate liberal perspective — he opposed quotas and affirmative action, urged the need for welfare reform, and objected to the excesses of multiculturalism and the kind of minority racism that upsets even such progressives as Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

But there was a subtext to what Mr. Duke explicitly and formally said in his speeches and his campaign literature, and the subtext, communicated by the continued depiction of Mr. Duke in Nazi uniform and Klan hood by his enemies, is that the historic core of American civilization is under attack. Quotas, affirmative action, race norming, civil rights legislation, multiculturalism in schools and universities, welfare, busing, and unrestricted immigration from Third World countries are all symbols of that attack and of the racial, cultural, and political dispossession they promise to inflict upon the white post-bourgeois middle classes. Conventional conservative ideology has little to say about this kind of onslaught and little to offer as a counterattack, and no matter how much Mr. Duke swore his allegiance to that ideology, no one — including his own supporters — really believed him.

It is precisely because the image of Mr. Duke that his enemies so assiduously cultivated was one that suggested seriousness — even fanaticism — about stopping the process of dispossession that he was able to gain votes from the entire range of Louisiana's white middle class — not just the lower middle class that feels threatened by economic as well as cultural trends but also from members of the upper middle class that are beginning to get the unsettling feeling of peering into an abyss. Given that perception — and it underlies the

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fear that middle-class Americans experience throughout the country—beating the political drums in support of global democracy, the virtues of immigration and free trade, and free market purism no more excites and attracts voters than the aforesaid controversies over holocaust revisionism.

Yet, while Mr. Duke has proved that American politics no longer swings around conventional ideological pivots, the problem he has is that he lacks an accessible and acceptable philosophical framework with which to elevate and broaden his appeal. Obviously, the neo-Nazi effusions of Mr. Duke's misspent youth are neither acceptable nor accessible. But in the 1990's, neither conventional liberal nor conventional conservative ideologies offer such a framework either. The first is locked into appeals to egalitarianism and redistributionist themes that reflect the interest of the underclass Mr. Duke is resisting and are bound up with the cultural crumbling that verbalist and intellectual elites welcome, promote, and benefit from.

The social and moral codes with which conventional conservative ideology is bound up are obsolete, and the bourgeois business class to which conservative ideology appealed is either defunct or so frightened of jeopardizing its dwindling interests that its members couldn't bring themselves to vote for Mr. Duke even when they wanted to. In the week before the election, the *Washington Post* interviewed a Louisiana businessman who confessed his attraction to the Duke campaign but who concluded that "business cannot thrive with the radicalism that David Duke portrays." This is the class from which Americans can expect leadership? Certainly it's the class Mr. Duke's enemies succeeded in terrifying with their threats of boycotts against the Louisiana economy.

What Mr. Duke and others, conservative or not, who understand the meaning of their approaching demotion to a servile condition need to do is begin a process of reeducation that will lift their minds out of both the tract literature of racism as well as the slogans of bourgeois individualism and open a vision of a new popular nationalism that can address the threats to the American nation, its people, and their way of life. Such a vision would seek to do more than merely rehearse horror stories of the welfare state and the black crime rate. It would have to make plain that the threat to American national identity is only in part ethnic but also cultural, economic, and political, that the threat comes from the dominance of elites that have vested interests in the dispossession of Americans and in the dispersion of their culture.

Unlike conventional conservatism, a new nationalism would not dwell on limiting the size of government but rather on the issue of who and what controls the government. The conflict is between a state (and the elite lodged in it) that is currently committed to cultural destruction and dispossession—in education, fiscal policy, law enforcement, social policy—and one that reflects the interests of the middle class that has long since become directly or indirectly dependent on the state and similar bureaucratic organizations in the economy and culture.

Hence, Mr. Duke or whoever inherits his political mantle will have to articulate a nationalist program designed to protect and benefit his constituency—through an economic nationalism that protects the country's jobs, technological base, and productive capacities; a social nationalism that offers an ethic of health, education, employment, and retirement security as well as restraints on the hedonistic ethic of immediate gratification that serves as a formula for current deracination; and a cultural nationalism that places the historic core of American civilization at the center of public concern and public policy.

Obviously, it is doubtful that most American conservatives—paleo, neo, or pseudo—would find acceptable such an explicit appeal to ethnocultural identity, or such a frank endorsement of the use of the state for social and cultural ends. Yet, for the last decade, mainstream conservatives have forfeited any claim to ideological orthodoxy precisely because they have enthusiastically supported any variety of heresies that accepted as legitimate the leviathan state constructed by American liberalism for the benefit of the underclass and the bureaucratic elites in alliance with it. If William Bennett and Jack Kemp can sing the praises of Martin Luther King, expand the budgets and staffs of the Education Department and HUD, and welcome Third World immigration as the salvation of the country, all in the name of conservatism, there's no reason why Middle Americans can't support government policies that would benefit them instead of the forces committed to the burial of their culture.

Yet there may be a few on the conventional right who will sign up. They may come to believe that whatever the virtues of the bourgeois ideology of small government and free markets, those institutions were mainly procedural or instrumental ones, intended as the most effective means to an end. The end, of course, was the security of the underlying cultural core of the civilization, not merely the preservation of the legal and formal mechanisms by which it was to be guarded. It is the survival of that core through reversal of the process of dispossession, not the preservation of obsolete procedural mechanisms, that is the elemental problem for those who seriously want to conserve their heritage. Or, to paraphrase Caspar Gutman again, we can always get other procedures, but there's only one American nation. ◇

LIBERAL ARTS

DEATH SENTENCES

Defense attorneys for six reputed Chicago mobsters called Chicago's federal prison "a warehouse of death." According to the *Chicago Tribune* last summer, Allan Ackerman and Patrick Tuite argued for the release of their clients because the prison's only dentist was infected with the AIDS virus. The dentist treated 2,800 patients before voluntarily withdrawing from practise. The infection risk to those patients "is virtually zero," according to estimates by the Federal Bureau of Prisons. But the attorneys disagreed, citing fears of AIDS as "the very real bogeyman of the late 20th Century, and when it is lurking in the corners of your cell, it is impossible to dismiss it from your thoughts."

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Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Unholy Dying

by Thomas Fleming

"In the midst of life we are in death." The old Prayer Book's admonition has never been more true or less understood than it is today. Modern man, despite his refusal to consider his own mortality, is busily politicizing all the little decisions and circumstances that attend his departure. Death penalty statutes, abortion regulations, right-to-die initiatives, and national health care plans have all been major political issues in recent years, although the connections between these issues are generally overlooked.

On the very day of the Washington State referenda on both abortion rights and doctor-assisted suicide, the *New York Times* was also reporting on the effects of a decision expanding the scope of Medicare. Most future Medicare recipients will now be guaranteed the right to purchase so-called Medigap policies to supplement the state-provided medical services. In other words, some insurance-buyers will be forced to subsidize the retirees who either failed to purchase supplementary policies or else squandered their money on the expensive plans huckstered by Ed McMahon and Art Linkletter.

While the nation's insurance commissioners were at work staving off mortality, the people of Washington were considering a proposal to legalize medical killing (as well as a proposal to incorporate the language of *Roe* v. *Wade* into state law). Despite polls showing widespread support for doctor-assisted suicide, voters at the last minute got cold feet, apparently preferring to take their chances with black market euthanasia. Are they afraid that some day, recovering from heart surgery, they might inadvertently blurt out a wish for easeful death? Do some of them suspect, I wonder, that family members and health care bureaucrats might have palpable economic motives for granting a request for "death with dignity"?

The Dutch experiment in euthanasia has been much publicized as the result of a book by Carlos Gomez, *Regulating Death*. Gomez presents sobering evidence that regulations designed to facilitate voluntary suicide are now being used to justify involuntary suicide. But even the Dutch practitioners of euthanasia are disturbed by similar American proposals, according to John Keown. Writing in the *Wall Street Journal* (November 5, 1991), Keown reports that Dutch physicians were afraid that in a society without national health care a patient's relatives might well have economic motives for administering the poisoned chalice.

But are patients really safer in the hands of a national health system? On the contrary. As health care costs are transferred from individuals and their families to the general population, a cost-cutting bureaucracy will inevitably be tempted to encourage, if not compel, euthanasia. Even in the United States, where health care is only partially

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nationalized, there is already a lively discussion over the excessive social costs. A few years ago Daniel Callahan created a controversy by suggesting that our resources were not infinite, that the more we subsidized organ transplants for drug addicts, the less money we had available for prenatal care. Callahan was attacked as an inhuman monster, but under any national health plan, the logic of his arguments cannot be escaped. Some British defenders of their own system will tell you candidly that one of socialized medicine's great advantages is that it lowers the overall cost of medical care. By this they mean that very sick people often die before they can receive treatment. The rich, it goes without saying, make their own arrangements.

National health care is only a synecdoche for the entire apparatus of socialized welfare that has replaced the informal structures of family and community. In primitive and premodern societies, individuals and families are generally responsible for most of the portfolio once held by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Parents reared and educated their own children, took care of the elderly members of the family, and saved what they could against the eventual rainy (more likely rainless) days. While rulers — kings and emperors, churches and commonwealths — might be expected to provide certain forms of emergency assistance, the general rule was that each man took care of his own.

All this has changed over the last hundred years, and the reigning assumption today is that the state is responsible for guaranteeing the physical health, mental and moral training, and life success of all its subjects. In a traditional order — in an ancient polis or an Italian commune — the political community could assume a certain responsibility for the general welfare without posing a danger to individual liberty or family autonomy. Government in such an order, even in the Roman empire, was comparatively weak, while the informal institutions were flanked and backed by traditions and precedents that could not easily be overwhelmed.

But these irrational safeguards against state power were destroyed by the progress of European liberalism that whittled away the authority of churches and destroyed the last remnants of feudalism, all in the name of individual liberties. (The American version is only transatlantic knock-off.) There was a positive side to the old liberalism, especially in its British phase. British liberalism exalted the dignity of the individual at the expense of the church, class distinctions, and irrational traditions. It placed the tremendous burden of civil obligation upon the middle classes, but it also helped to create the Victorian character that was able to carry the load. It was the creed of sober gentlemen and disciplined men of business, and if it crushed much, if not most, of what was valuable in the old order, it also checked the growing power of the state. The French might have been oppressed by kings and consuls, but the propertied classes of Britain — so long as they could restrict the franchise — were secure in their rights of property and contract.

Such a system could not endure. It was threatened by the entire course of the 19th century, by what was called progress: the rapid pace of industrialization, the political claims of the poorer classes, and the growing fear of Red revolution. A purely negative conception of liberty offered few consolations to an unemployed millhand, and under the circumstances the old paternalistic Toryism began to look better and better. Some theory, inevitably, had to be found that would justify a vigorous state intervention into matters of childrearing, public health, and relief of poverty. Perhaps it did not really matter how coherent such a theory was, so long as it was couched in the reassuring accents of Whig liberalism. The man of destiny turned out to be the mediocre professor of philosophy, T.H. Green.

What Green did, in essence, was to take the old liberalism, with its insistence upon individual liberty, and turn it into the new liberalism, with its acquiescence in socialism. To do this was a simple trick of synthesis: he rewrote Kant and Hegel in the terms of Locke and Mill; that is, while repeating the old arguments in favor of negative liberty, he introduced the notion of positive liberty, which is the freedom to approach moral perfection. Since the individual's moral perfection contributed to the common good, it was the right of the state to take such steps as would insure everyone's ability to aim at perfection. In practice, this meant compulsory school attendance, regulation of spirits, and rather sweeping restrictions on the rights of property and contract.

Green was not alone in his attempt to socialize liberalism, but after his by no means premature death at the age of 46, he emerged as the symbolic figurehead. Closer to our own day, British social theorists have rung the changes on Green's conception of positive liberty. Since the common good (or the national interest) depends on the welfare and responsible character of individuals, it is the state's duty to see to it that every member of society has a more or less equal chance to "fulfill himself" or "reach his potential." R.H. Tawney in *Equality* conceded that men were born with different talents, but they are, nonetheless, "equally entitled as human beings to consideration and respect." The state will, therefore, increase "the well-being of society . . . if it so plans its organization that, whether their powers are great or small, all its members may be equally enabled to make the best of such powers as they possess."

In Britain debates over welfare were concentrated on the different methods by which relief was provided to the indigent. Until the 20th century, England was in principle a Christian society that relied upon the parishes as the providers of food and shelter to the poor. So long as England retained some of its feudal or medieval character, the king could undertake the Christian obligation to assist the poor. But this obligation, although it was severed from the Crown along with the head of Charles I, has haunted the English as much as King Charles' head bedeviled the conversation of Tristram Shandy's Uncle Toby.

To some extent, the English have seen themselves as participants in a national community. Despite profound ethnic differences between Scandinavian, Saxon, Norman, and Celtic elements in the population, the people of England were unified in the Crown, the Parliament, and in a legal and administrative system that has been far more centralized than anything in the American experience. As a result, the main figures of British political philosophy — Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Mill, and Bentham — have tended to reduce their discussion to the simple polarity of the subject (or citizen) and the sovereign. In its various phases,

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this was a tradition of natural rights and individual liberties. It begins with Hobbes' assertion of the sovereign's role in establishing civil order and ends, in the later 19th century, with the declaration that the state is the ultimate guarantor of the common good.

In America the transformation has been somewhat retarded by the peculiarities of our federal system, but in the more centralized states of Europe—Britain, France, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Germany—the process has proceeded rapidly to the logical conclusion that the state holds ultimate responsibility for the well-being of all its citizens. Since the British disease was carried to the United States by immigrants from Great Britain, it is only a matter of time before this country succumbs, not only to such symptoms as national health care, but to the pandemic plague of social democracy.

No one who has read Horace or Sophocles can fail to appreciate the pagan understanding of mortality as the great fact that gives shape and meaning to human life.

In fact, the entire American discussion of socialized medicine consists in a debate between two British positions: the rigid socialism of the Labor Party, as mimicked by Ted Kennedy and Joe Biden, and the more moderate Toryism that combines the old Liberals' concern with economic freedom (and efficiency) with the old Tories' regard for the national welfare. The Tory critique is offered, not surprisingly, by an Englishman at the Heritage Foundation, and it is to a large extent endorsed by other English conservatives resident in America. Like most of their countrymen, English journalists persist in regarding the United States as a wayward colony and can never succeed in understanding that the American track record on "democracy" is longer and better than the British.

What few Englishmen have ever appreciated (Burke and Acton being great exceptions) is the diversity of the American regions and states. Our federal system was not invented by Madison and Hamilton; it was the only possible expression of the facts of our political life in the 18th century. By the time of our secession from the Crown, Britain was already a highly centralized state, and what little was left of local jurisdiction, as in Scotland, was already being swallowed up by a national government that would, under the influence of a political Cagliostro (Trollope's term for Disraeli), assume the name and trappings of empire. Of course they could not understand the petty grievances of Massachusetts merchants, much less the loftier motives of the statesmen of Pennsylvania and Virginia.

The English did not understand us then, and they do not understand us now. The tragedy is that we once fought a war to be free of Britain, and now two hundred years later, when we have lost almost all the virtues of our British ancestors, we still cannot free ourselves from their worst moral and political vices.

We *will* have national (as opposed to county or state) health care, because we can no longer think as Americans, and because we no longer trust either the strength of our social institutions or the character of our people.

The British disease is as deadly as AIDS and much more communicable. In practice the malady is a kind of arteriosclerosis, a progressive constriction of a people's will to do something for themselves. It is the result (as Mancur Olson has pointed out) of too many years of democracy, too many years in which petty interest groups have managed to direct the nation's resources and energies in the direction of union members, bureaucrats, and other privileged classes. But there may be deeper causes. Britain is one of the first nations to discard its religious faith. I can count on the fingers of one hand the English Christians—even nominal Christians—I have met over the years. Their churches and cathedrals minister the sacraments to a handful of maiden ladies and eccentrics. A few years ago I spent several days in the company of a fine and proper English family. Together we visited a great Catholic cathedral in Europe. The children were fascinated. "Who's that person, mummy?" they asked. "Why that's a man, dear, his name was Jesus." "Jesus? Why is he hanging up there on that wood thing, and who are those people with wings?"

The mother went on at some length, explaining each Christian story, patiently pointing out that they were simply stories that some people used to believe but no longer did. Her husband confessed to me that he was a little nervous bringing the kids into a place like this. All the art and music in Catholic Europe was great stuff, but too bad it had to be connected with something so corrupting as religion. He was right to be afraid, I told him, since the best way of making Christianity attractive to children is to expose them to its beauty and then forbid it, like a dangerous sweet.

England did lose its faith, and we are not slow to follow. As Nietzsche knew all too well, man cannot live without God, without some promise that life has meaning, if not here and now, at least in some other dimension, where things are as they ought to be. Growing ever more fearful of the grave, we cling to the things we can buy or consume; unable to worship a being beyond ourselves, we turn our bodies into temples of self-worship and spend enormous amounts of time and money on keeping the temple in good repair. Even so-called Christians are not exempt. Fundamentalist and Pentecostalist ministers are often fanatics on financial planning and diet crazes. Do they think they are going to live forever? In this same unregenerate flesh?

If the English find it difficult to understand either our virtues or our political arrangements, they comprehend our vices all too well. In our rapid descent from republican virtue to imperial decadence, the English can see themselves parodied and distorted. The spectacle is as amusing as it is disturbing, something like the behavior of monkeys whose antics remind us uncomfortably of our own foibles.

English visitors have often commented on "the American way of death" and the almost Egyptian lengths to which we have been willing to go in the conduct of funerals. But this extravagance is not so much an American as a Californian trait, and Evelyn Waugh set *The Loved One* not in Des Moines but among the lotus-eaters of Southern California. To the extent that all America is turning Californian, it is a

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nation in flight from every reality, not least the reality of death.

The fear of dying trumps even our fear of death. Let me live, we tell ourselves, a solid seventy-five to eighty years in good health, patched up from time to time by the surgeons, and then let us "go gentle into that good night" without pain or fear. To escape the torments of dying, we are willing even to kill ourselves. For a Christian, self-murder is a sin against the Holy Ghost, an act of ultimate denial and despair. I am not dogmatic on this subject; there are some circumstances in which suicide might be the least evil choice, but those cases are as rare and exceptional as the scenarios designed by professors of ethics.

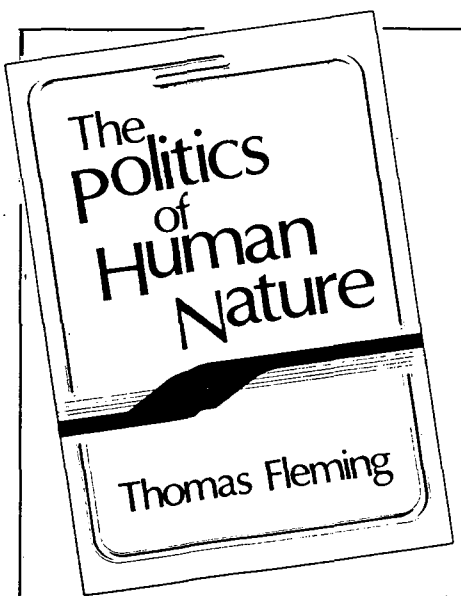
For most of us, suicide is a cowardly rebellion against the God who made us, whether we acknowledge Him or not. It is a denial of the goodness of creation, a repudiation of all—the good as well as the bad—we have experienced. It is an annihilation of our very lives, and if there is an afterlife for the suicide, it is the torture of the amnesiac who knows he once had a real existence somewhere, but he has lost it. He will look upon the faces of wife and children, parents and friends, and be told, "these were all you loved, were all you were," and yet feel nothing but the despair that comes from feeling nothing.

To escape dying by compassing our own death is the very opposite of all the world's wisdom. The end of life is death, and he that would live well had best prepare to die well. That is the burden of Jeremy Taylor's wise and beautiful book, *The Rule and Exercise of Holy Dying*. "He that would die well," says Taylor, "must always look for death, every day knocking at the gates of the grave; and then the gates of the grave shall never prevail upon him to do him mischief." So far from being an exclusively Christian message, Taylor recognized that "this was the advice of all the wise and good men of the world."

In the days when all educated men knew a good deal of Latin, if not of Greek, this wisdom could not be escaped. No one who has read Horace or Sophocles can fail to appreciate the pagan understanding of mortality as the great fact that gives shape and meaning to human life. Even the erotic poets harp on death as much as love, as if life's sweetest pleasures derived added piquancy from the bitter gall of the grave. The *Iliad* is an endlessly illustrated sermon on death, and its hero, Achilles, was in legend given the choice between a short, glorious life and a protracted existence without glory. His Trojan opponent, Hector, is no less tragic in his awareness. In the same breath that he advises his wife to rear their son to be a brave champion, he tells her, "I know full well the day is coming when holy Troy will perish." Scipio Africanus is said to have quoted these lines at the destruction of Carthage, prophesying a similar fate for his own, for the moment, triumphant nation.

All this we have forgotten, our philosophy along with our faith, our history along with our Latin, and much of what we call the welfare state—and all our schemes for socializing health and dying—is no more than a giant tomb we are constructing as a refuge from the fact of death. As John Gray observed some time ago in this magazine, there are virtues in both Christian and pagan cultures, but for an ex-Christian culture, for a nation that has lost its faith, there is no hope, because it transfers its impossible longings for immortality into the present sphere and gives to government the power that only a god can exercise.

The state, to use Hobbes's language, is no longer a mortal god but one that claims immortality along with infallibility. As that god assumes all power over life and death, it can brook no rival, have no other god before it. At the end of *Brave New World* the world-controller explains that the state depends on the illusions of permanent health and happiness, because the sick and the aged begin to think queer thoughts about God. "God isn't compatible," he pointed out, "with machinery and scientific medicine and happiness. You must make your choice. Our civilization has chosen machinery, medicine, and happiness."



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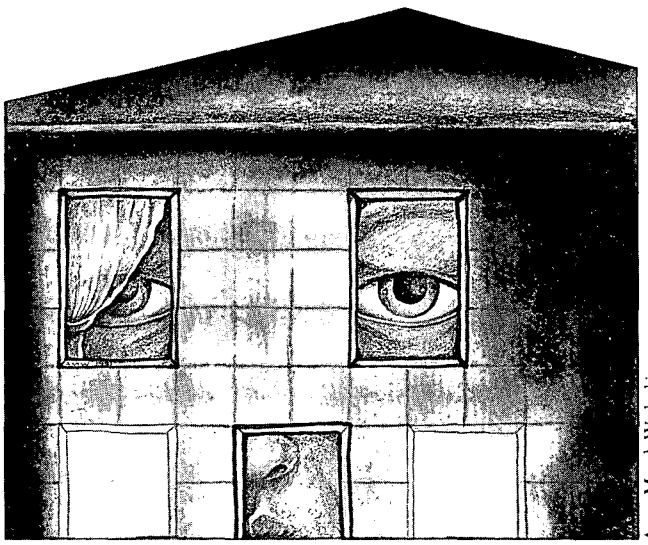
Confessions of a Housing Policy Junkie

by Allan Carlson



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

I spent the 1970's looking for a social policy agenda I could love. I thought I had found one in federal housing subsidies.

The image of the free family on its homestead powerfully appealed to my imagination. I saw the suburban home as heir to the Jeffersonian agrarian spirit, its bond to property stimulating the vigor, independence, and virtue once found on the yeoman farm. I agreed with Catharine Beecher, the mid-19th-century philosopher of the American home, that a proper dwelling could shape a family's moral character, promote family stability, and help preserve a decent society. I was persuaded by architect Frederick Law Olmsted's 1868 declaration that the suburbs combined the finest aspects of town and country and marked "the best application of the arts of civilization to which mankind has yet obtained." I looked with approval on the business propagandists of the 1920's who sought to chill labor unrest with the promise, "After work, the happy home," and on the opportunistic idealism of developer Bill Levitt in the 1940's, who declared: "No man who owns his own house and lot can be a communist. He has too much to do."

The politicians also persuaded me that they were, for once, doing the right thing. The monumental Housing Act of 1949, for example, had opened with a stirring declaration that "the general welfare and security of the nation . . . require . . . the realization as soon as feasible of the goal of a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family." Even that New Deal war-horse, Lyndon Johnson, made sense in his 1965 statement that "the ultimate goal in our free enterprise system must be a decent home for every American family."

I became convinced that federal intervention into the family housing market had taken four positive forms (the fifth, "public housing," always seemed a disaster). The Federal Housing Administration, created in 1934, was midwife to the long-term, amortized mortgage featuring a low down payment. Establishment of the Federal Home Loan Bank (1932-33) and the chartering of the Federal National Mortgage Association or "Fannie Mae" (1938) formed the financial infrastructure for an expanding mortgage market. The "GI Bill" of 1944 provided government insurance and waived down payments for the millions of vets seeking mortgages. And reconfiguration of the federal income tax in the 1930's and 1940's also gave preferred status to owner-occupied homes. Congress chose to exclude the "imputed rent" of such dwellings from taxation, yet at the same time allowed taxpayers to claim deductions for mortgage interest and state and local taxes. In addition, federal law exempted from taxation the capital gains derived from sale of a residence, if a new dwelling was purchased within a given time.

The powerful combination of direct and indirect subsidies appeared to have dramatic, positive effects after World War II. Between 1945 and 1960 alone, there was a 90 percent increase in the number of owner-occupied homes. Econometric studies confirmed that federal interventions accounted for a substantial share of this increase. More importantly, family life showed every sign of strengthening in this period. American fertility climbed from Depression-era lows to an average of 3.6 births per woman, marking an unprecedented reversal of a century-old birthrate decline. The divorce rate

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fell steadily between 1946 and 1960, while the number of new households created each year soared. Young American women embraced suburban domesticity with a fervor that embarrassed their suffragette mothers and grandmothers. By all signs, the laws of sociology and history had been shattered and a familistic America had been reborn. In my most dreamy-eyed moments, I even imagined that the Great Distributists — Belloc and Chesterton — would have smiled on this American scheme to "share the property" with the people.

I was aware, to be sure, of the dour complaints registered by economists and others of the Malthusian persuasion. Some noted the manner in which federal housing subsidies actually redistributed income from the poor to the well-off. Others complained about a startling "over investment" in housing by both individuals and the nation at large, which disrupted capital markets, retarded other forms of capital investment, and caused a net reduction in American productivity growth rates. Still others cited the heavy penalty imposed on renters. Environmentalists, for their part, fretted about the loss of prime farm land around Chicago or Indianapolis, or the new strain on air and water resources in Phoenix or Los Angeles. But these all struck me as relatively minor complaints alongside the gains in family strength and autonomy that the great suburban experiment seemed to have spawned.

At some point in the 1980's, though, my confidence began to waver. True, the great American housing industry was continuing its forced march across the countryside. The massive Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968 had looked to the imminent "huge increase" in the number of new families, as the baby boomers reached adulthood and began to form households of their own. Accordingly, it had sharply increased FHA mortgage ceilings, subsidized interest rates for first-time home purchasers with low incomes, and established the Government National Mortgage Association ("Ginnie Mae") to buy up FHA and other loans at nonmarket rates. Moreover, these actions had infused huge new sums into housing, residential (nonfarm) mortgage debt rising from $358 billion in 1970 to $2,162 billion in 1987, an extraordinary after-inflation increase of 311 percent. And yes, I nervously chanted the mantra that all of this new money was going to new families in new homes, and strengthening our national fabric.

Yet I couldn't shake off the reality that family life in America was, in fact, unraveling. All the positive trends of the 1950's had shifted noisily into reverse. The birthrate plummeted, from 118 (per 1,000 women, ages 15-44) in 1960 to 65 in 1978, while the number of annual divorces tripled over the same time span. Meanwhile, the level of illegitimate births soared, from 224,000 in 1960 to 715,000 in 1982 and over one million in 1989. The formation of new family households, meanwhile, slowed down, as young adults deferred marriage, many indefinitely. Once centers of optimism and bearers of the spirit of new community, the suburbs became instead symbols of gender-role confusion, white flight, and escape.

In face of these contradictions centered on the growing disjunction between housing and family life, I tried denial. Housing policy, I reasoned, had nothing to do with the family crisis: better to blame it on the feminists; or the pornographers; or the New Left. Indeed, I convinced myself for a time that the family situation might have been even worse, if the federal subsidies had not been there, working to shelter families from the cultural storms. When that argument ceased to reassure, I clung to the "standards" argument: everything would have continued to work if FHA examiners had stuck to their guns, and had continued to deny mortgages to "unconventional" households and unmarried persons.

Yet some correlations continued to haunt me. For instance, the number of housing units had climbed from 53 million in 1960 to 91 million in 1987, while average household size had fallen from 3.33 to 2.64. In the 1970-76 period alone, the population of the United States grew by 10.3 million people, while the number of separate households rose by 9.5 million. In rough terms, this meant that for every individual added to the population a new household in a distinct dwelling was also formed. Amazingly, these changes had occurred when real incomes were relatively stagnant and the ratio of median home-sales price to median income was rising sharply, from 2.37 in 1970 to 3.05 in 1978.

Then, stumbling one day across the book *America's Housing: Prospects and Problems* by George Sternlieb and James Hughes, I found my suspicions confirmed and my dreams shattered through cogent analysis. Noting that housing demand since the late 1960's had been driven primarily by the *shrinkage* in average household size, they concluded: "The very decline in the size of household, with its nominal generation of increased demand for housing units, *may in turn be a consequence of the availability and costs of housing units generally.*" Put another way, the *excess capacity* of the residential construction industry resulted in the building of homes that could only be filled by the parts of shattered or never-formed families.

Slowly, agonizingly, the horrible truth came into focus: not only had federal housing policy ceased to sustain family life; it had now become an engine destroying families! Repeating the classic bureaucratic pattern, the regulators and the regulated had conspired to keep the housing industry afloat by sabotaging the very social institution they had once sworn to serve. A recession could be avoided, the macroeconomic argument went, only through the maintenance of residential construction at an artificially high level. The American economy was hooked, with a superheated housing market being its drug-of-choice.

Indeed, it was now obvious that both industry and government had a vested interest in family disruption. Federal regulators showed their hand by easing mortgage eligibility standards and offering direct subsidies that reduced the real costs of creating two households out of one. Other direct and indirect subsidies encouraged home ownership among the unmarried by substituting government help for the economic gains (such as economies of scale) provided by marriage and family living. Through this ready sacrifice of the family, the real estate and residential construction industries gained another two or three decades of life-as-they-knew-it, while the federal government gained a burgeoning number of "nonfamily households" (8 million in 1960, 27 million in 1990) that would have more "needs"

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and be far more dependent on government "services" than the semiautonomous families they had displaced.

But this awful realization was merely the beginning of my reeducation. Looking back, I grew aware that the United States had paid another large price through its submission to the engineers of federal housing policy: a weird homogenization that cut at the fabric of authentic pluralism and real community. Its roots lay in the Housing Act of 1934. This measure charged the new FHA with the establishment of uniform insurance and property standards for a national housing market and the stimulation of technical and land-planning standards to ease tract housing work.

Not only did federal housing policy suppress family autonomy, subvert real communities, and assault regional vitality, but it also worked to corrupt the morals of the citizenry and to encourage family breakup.

The push for "national housing standards" took on greater urgency with the onset of the Cold War. A special 1951 issue of the prestigious *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* looked at "Defense Through Decentralization: A Symposium on Dispersal," and elevated the suburbanization drive into a national security mandate. As a measure of civil defense, the editors urged that all future residential development be guided toward "garden cities" located in the open countryside. This dispersion of America's population "would so reduce the advantages an enemy might hope to obtain by dropping his supply of bombs that . . . he might decide not to use the weapon at all." Contributors agreed that private property rights and local political foot-dragging stood in the way of reasoned national efforts. While hoping for a federal superagency to guide the needed planning, they concluded that Uncle Sam already had the needed power through FHA mortgage and GI insurance programs to push most new construction out to the urban fringe. This power should be fully exercised in line with the national "imperative" for "orderly dispersal" of the cities.

At about the same time, leading residential architects and urban planners fell under the spell of a peculiar theory in family sociology, with further pernicious results in the public policy realm. They referenced the work in the 1920's of William Ogburn and Ernest Rutherford, who had emphasized that "there is a considerable and increasing disorganization of the family" that would end only as the family structure adjusted to modern realities. Housing theorists took a more particular shine to the work of Ernest W. Burgess and Henry J. Locke, who argued that as the family shed its legal, social, and economic functions, it reorganized on the companionship principle. Embracing this world view, the social engineers presumed that this "companionship family" would predominate in the future, resting on "the mutual affection, the sympathetic understanding, and the comradeship of its members." As the home became the place for psychological intimacy, democracy, and love, they asserted that governmental and other nonfamily institutions would solidify their control over the old family functions of education, financial security, youth training, and religious piety.

Catching the spirit, urban planners drew the conclusion that "it becomes possible . . . to maintain family interaction without recourse to the traditional housekeeping dwelling unit." Home structures "inherited from the family farm" should be supplanted by rational, flexible designs more in tune with "modern life patterns." In an influential 1951 article, architect Svend Reimer celebrated the use of "family functions as a guide to residential architecture." Stressing that "housing attitudes must be related to long-term trends of social change in the family," Reimer saw functional architecture promoting a "definite way of life," one that abandoned formal rooms like parlors or single-purpose rooms and replaced them by flexible rooms "that serve the everyday life of the family."

These functionalist assumptions about the loss of the family's economic and social roles and the reorganization of the family about its intimate psychological core burrowed deeply into federal housing policy. The official 1979 "Fannie Mae" history of housing stressed that "the family was no longer the basic economic as well as the social unit." Regarding home design, this meant that "there was no longer so great a need for attics, sheds, storage cellars, work rooms, sewing rooms, etc." Easy access to "processed food supplies" meant less need for pantries and large kitchens. The loss of the family's social role also implied little need for "the drawing rooms and grand staircases of former years." Instead, the new "companionship family" needed "open plans with flexible spaces that could be adapted to the family's more informal lifestyle. . . . Space and facilities for nurturing . . . were needed to replace the space for workshops that had been used when economic function was so important."

In truth, this quasi-official analysis offered intellectual cover to an attack on the residual economic importance of the family, and the real power it still held vis-à-vis the state. Housing policy joined other modernist weapons in a final assault against those "functions" clustered under the phrase "household production," which protected family autonomy and, in turn, personal liberty. FHA guidelines transformed rogue sociological theory into action, and mortgages were systematically denied to any residence that contained facilities designed for use as a productive shop, an office, a separate apartment for extended family member or renter, or a preschool.

This federal pressure for a national leveling of family life took other forms, as well. FHA rules discouraged both regional and experimental architectures, favoring instead "conservative" design focused on a few models: Cape Cod, Colonial, the "split-level," and the "basic ranch." The agency's *Underwriting Training Handbook* cast such matters under the rubric of conformity and nonconformity, explaining: "The significance of nonconformity in real estate is that as the degree of nonconformity progresses further from a reasonable degree of conformity with other properties in the neighborhood, the value of the nonconforming property becomes less and less." In service to this

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tongue-tied principle, New Orleans' suburbs would be built to resemble Boston's suburbs, to resemble Tucson's suburbs, to resemble Minneapolis' suburbs, in the imperative federal quest for homogenization and harmony.

At the end of my withdrawal, I concluded that federal housing policy had become a noxious, even despotic tool. Not only did it suppress family autonomy, subvert real communities, and assault regional vitality, but it also worked to corrupt the morals of the citizenry and to encourage family breakup. In turn, federal housing policy helped to spawn the social pathologies—teenage pregnancy, juvenile crime, substance abuse, long-term dependency, educational failure—that now degrade our once-sheltered suburbs, as well as our cities. (Feeling charitable at the moment, I won't discuss here the important role also played by housing mythology in creating the *fiscal* debacle known as the Savings and Loan crisis.) In short, I found the federal housing agenda to be merely another, fairly run-of-the-mill government welfare program, quietly working out the perverse logic of the great New Deal experiment in state capitalism, launched sixty years ago.

Clear-eyed now, the experience leaves me unnerved. If housing policy, with all its promise, has proven to be socially destructive on a scale such as this, what can one say about Aid to Families with Dependent Children, food stamps, school aid, Medicaid, Social Security, or any of the hundreds of lesser known federal programs also promising "comfort and aid" to the citizenry? Simply this: in every case, the result of federal activism has been to diminish household integrity and to increase personal dependence on Uncle Sam. It is not true, as conservative critics of the federal enterprise often charge, that "nothing works." In fact, virtually *everything works* to undermine the government's principle rival, the family, and to create a population of isolated, ignorant, and dependent sheep.

Horace II, xiv

by Jack Flavin

"Eheu fugaces, Postume, Postume . . ."

Ah, Postumus, Postumus, the fleeting years
Slip by and no virtue of ours can forestall
  Onrushing age's wrinkles and gray hairs,
  Or put off death, who is the lord of all.

No, my friend, not if you were to sacrifice
A bull a day. Hecatombs would not suffice
  Pluto, that pitiless guardian
  Of the monster, three-bodied Geryon,

And giant Tityus beyond the sad stream
Which all of us who feed upon earth's largesse,
  Kings and poor peasants, must surely cross.
  We escape bloody wars in vain, it seems,

Survive breakers in the Adriatic storm
And keep ourselves safe from the sirocco's harm
  During Equinox. It's all in vain.
  In the end, black Cocytus must be seen

By all, winding in its sluggish stream through Hell,
Where the accursed daughters of Danaüs dwell
  And Sisyphus in his eternal
  Toil. Earth must be forsaken by us all,

Home and one's dear spouse. Trees you cultivated
Won't follow you, their short-lived master. Hated
  Cypresses alone go with you too.
  And some heir who is worthier than you

Will soon be guzzling your choice Caecuban wine,
The vintage you've hoarded under lock and key
  (Fit for pontiffs' feasts, it is so fine!)
  He'll dribble on the floor and parquetry.

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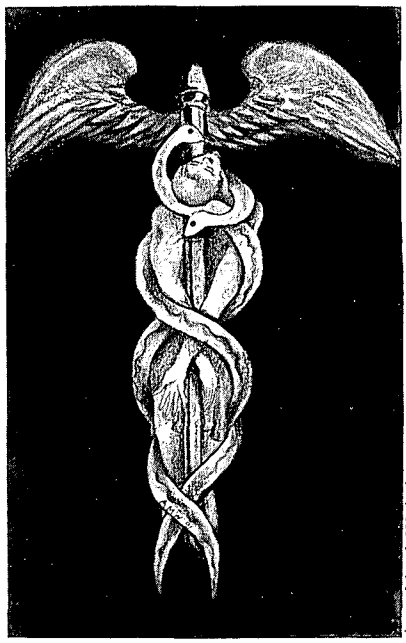
The Doctor and the State

by William Murchison



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

While cooling my preadolescent heels in the family doctor's office forty-odd years ago, I was given to studying a Victorian Era print that hung on the waiting room wall. *The Doctor* was its title. A young woman, bare arm flung helplessly toward the viewer, lay stretched on chairs in, apparently, the family parlor. The tailcoated doctor gazed down on her with great concern. Family members hovered nearby. Matters looked grave. What was the young lady's affliction? And, equally to the point, what was the likelihood of recovery? The artist offered no hints. That was not, of course, the point of the painting.

The point was, here is medicine. In a moment of extremity, patient and healer join in near-spiritual communion. There is something of the sacred in it all. Pay? Remuneration? The doctor had not come for these. Anyway, the parties, with nods and murmurs, would afterwards arrange matters to their mutual satisfaction. No computers would spit out the reckoning, no committee's review and stamp of approval.

There is a purity about *The Doctor* that is more beguiling now than when it fascinated me in the 50's—an age more akin, in spirit, to the 1890's than the 1990's. Doctors healed, and monetary matters somehow took care of themselves. This is not to idealize a bygone time when cholera, tuberculosis, childbirth, and malaria swept away thousands whose cure today could be taken more or less for granted. The problem then was the comparatively primitive character of medicine. The problem today is lack of funds. We cannot afford the wondrous hospital rooms, with the wondrous facilities and wondrous medicines now available to us.

William Murchison is a columnist for the Dallas Morning News.

Health care in 1992 is the best, most sophisticated ever—and the most expensive, not just ever but anywhere, accounting for nearly 12 percent of the Gross National Product. Though inflation in the larger economy seems mostly under control, health care costs rise sharply each year. What to do? Again and again one encounters the familiar nostrum: national, centralized health care. The government would be in charge, paying the piper, calling the tune. Hawkers of this sweet-smelling patent medicine abound in modern America. "The penalties for not developing a national health care policy are severe, and growing," say four health care specialists in a recent book, *The Crisis in Health Care*. What is needed, they contend, is "a coherent federal policy."

The Heritage Foundation itself, fountainhead of so many market-oriented policy initiatives in the 1980's, supports a "compact between the U.S. government and its citizens." Under this compact the government would "devise a market-based system" of health care; in return, the citizens would accept "mandatory family protection," the obligation to buy health insurance or else enroll in a prepaid health plan. You may recall "mandatory." It was for 70 years the basis of daily life in the Soviet Union.

None of this has quite the freshness of morning dew. College debaters of my vintage will recall batting around back in the Kennedy years the topic of national health care and whether the United States should institute such care. For two decades Senator Edward Kennedy has argued "yes, we should."

The latest Kennedy plan would force employers to either offer health insurance or pay into a government-sponsored plan called, patriotically, AmeriCare. The new plan would largely replace Medicaid, the federal health care program for the poor. The sponsors project first-year costs of $6 billion

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with subsequent savings of $78 billion thanks to "cost-containment" requirements. We eat our cake and have it, too. The collapse of the Soviet Union as an active adversary will redouble the agitation for siphoning defense dollars into health care.

The Democrats start with an incontestable datum: millions of Americans (estimates range from thirty to thirty-seven million) lack health insurance, hence affordable access to medical care. This suggests, to those of a certain turn of mind, a federal solution: twist arms, bawl orders, tell people what they're going to do for their own good. Democrats would order employers to make health insurance available to their workers. This the employers could do by purchasing insurance out of their own resources or paying a special tax for the purpose, a seductively cheap 7 percent of payroll cost has been proposed. The obvious incentive, private plans being much more expensive, is to confide the whole health care problem to Uncle Sam.

The Democrats anticipate that health care will be a pivotal factor in the 1992 elections. A *New York Times/CBS News* poll released last October says Americans believe, 2 to 1, that a Democratic President would do more than George Bush "to improve health care." Why, say political orators and op-ed writers, Canada is already doing what we should be doing. Actually, the Canadian health care "system," as Edmund F. Haislmaier of the Heritage Foundation explains, is "a collection of separate, although very similar, provincial systems." Each provides universal health care in accordance with national guidelines. A recent poll by the *Wall Street Journal* and *NBC News* purported to show that 69 percent of American voters favored the establishment of such a system here. There might have been less enthusiasm had it been widely known that such a system, applied here, would be grossly expensive (requiring an extra $189-339 billion) and that the wait in Canada for major, nonemergency surgery can be long (an average of five months for heart patients in British Columbia).

How interesting all of this is. And how useless and retrograde. Nothing very surprising is going on with health care, given the way the system is organized. The problem: a lack of marketplace incentives. The solution: incentives. To see this we need only to don our spectacles.

In the days of *The Doctor*, finance was no complicated matter. A small bill went from the individual doctor to the individual patient, who paid it out of household resources. Much has changed since then. This is not the same nation it was, medically speaking, any more than it is the same nation culturally, politically, economically, or religiously. Since the end of World War II, Americans have depended more on health insurance and less on their own resources. For this development, government policy, and the general bureaucratization of American life, seem chiefly responsible. Patients pay out of their own pockets only 28 cents of every dollar charged by the doctor, 10 cents of every dollar on the hospital bill. How wonderful! you exclaim. But wait.

Employer-provided health insurance is a major workplace benefit. Many people stick to jobs they dislike for fear of losing their health insurance. An old friend of mine, a communications industry executive, turned down an excellent business opportunity with more money and prestige. His wife suffered from breast cancer; no insurance carrier in the world would have sought or accepted her business. Layoffs are sorely feared for just this reason.

The tax code has contributed to this distortion of effort and purpose. Since income taxes are steep compared to twenty-five years ago, and health insurance is not taxable to the employee or the company, insurance can be treated as an employee benefit—on a par somewhat with the Christmas turkey of old. It is generally forgotten that the money so spent is, like the Social Security deduction, money unavailable for salaries. Accepting it, the employee loses his freedom of action. He has no incentive to shop around for medical benefits. He takes what the company offers, which increasingly is a health maintenance organization (HMO), practicing impersonal if (in my own limited experience) decent medicine.

So the health care industry escapes marketplace disciplines. Hospital "A" sends the bill, insurance carrier "B" forks over. The carrier, to appease the stockholders, raises its charges to the company. The company, sensitive to its own stockholders' reaction, raises employee premiums and/or its own contribution; the latter remedy, which sounds less painful, actually reduces money available for salary increases. For classic anticompetitiveness, you can't beat this. There is no way to know the true marketplace cost of medical care, because only the most limited kind of marketplace exists. How could there possibly be much incentive to hold down costs?

It is a curious thing: while the ex-communist bloc struggles to throw off the incubus of state control, American politicians and businessmen rush to its fetid embrace. Alarm bells should clang from every steeple whenever the breathless argument is made that bureaucracy can fix a problem whose origin is bureaucracy.

What goes for the private sector goes in spades for the public sector. The two large government insurance programs are Medicare for the elderly and Medicaid for the poor. Both are hideously expensive. Both, by fostering an artificial demand for medical services, have brought about gross and rapid overexpansion of medical facilities and services, just as the availability of loans, along with federal deposit guarantees, created an artificial demand for new buildings in the 1980's. Medicare costs are rising so sharply, and the population aging so rapidly, that the federal Health Care Financing Administration has adopted a proposal, effective the first of this year, designed to control costs by limiting reimbursement to the doctors. The government itself stipulates what a given service is worth. The Heritage Foundation predicts that the plan "will result in an increasing number of doctors refusing to accept Medicare patients" and in higher bills for non-Medicare patients. Meanwhile Medicaid, painfully underfinanced, normally pays 50 cents

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on the dollar. Again the customers suffer; doctors will not take them on. Too much hassle, not enough money, too much government entanglement.

It is a curious thing: while the ex-communist bloc struggles to throw off the incubus of state control, American politicians and businessmen rush to its fetid embrace. Alarm bells should clang from every steeple whenever the breathless argument is made that bureaucracy can fix a problem whose origin is bureaucracy. Why not equally expect moths to patch up a coat sleeve? One thing and one alone will work in the health policy context. That thing is reversion, insofar as possible, to the economic ethos of *The Doctor* and its era. Let no one, or at least as few as possible, stand economically between doctor and patient. Let the marketplace work.

But cold as a stethoscope the counterargument will come: a Honda Accord is a commodity; a red snapper fillet is a commodity; health insurance is not a commodity; you *can't shop, compare, evaluate it in the same objective,* experiential way. Maybe not, but you can do some robust tire-kicking with the hospital and the insurance company. The fundamental idea that one increasingly hears, by way of answer to the national health care lobby, is to trust employees to buy their own health insurance — the kind and quantity they want, at the cost they prefer, with the carrier of their own choice. "Every year," writes Regina E. Herzlinger in the September 1991 *Atlantic*, "employers would transfer the money they now spend on health insurance to their employees, who would use it to buy their own policies." Qualified health care expenses could be deducted from taxes up to the amount of the transfer.

A task force of market-oriented experts from major think tanks says let's permit people to set up tax-free medical savings accounts for small medical expenses. Furthermore, hospitals, before admitting patients, would talk prices with them. It would be possible at last to say, "no, don't do *that* to me, it's not worth the money, do *this* instead" — not unlike telling the car salesman you don't really need magnesium wheel covers. The task force, coordinated by the National Center for Policy Analysis, based in Dallas, lays out at meticulous length its plan for letting people buy what they can afford and shun what they can't afford or don't need. A certain meticulousness is required in scholarly circles, but the simplicity of the thing sticks fastest in the mind.

What a fine 20th-century formulation — that we own our bodies. What a logical answer to the health care mess, granting us permission to care for those bodies as we think best. *Choice in schools, choice in health care, choice in* — how much else? The possibilities are infinite once you get started. Hardly a department of modern life is uncircumscribed by government rules and regulations. Economic and social distortion seems our lot in life. Maybe our forebears had to lie around in parlors rather than in fresh-smelling hospital rooms with remote-controlled TV, costing two hundred dollars a day. Still, these forebears had an instinct for liberty of mind and independence of action. A glorious and salubrious tonic, human freedom. Too bad we ever entrusted the prescription to Washington, D.C. ◁▷

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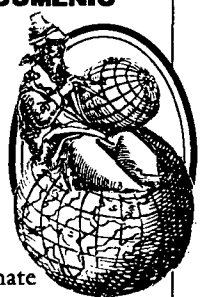

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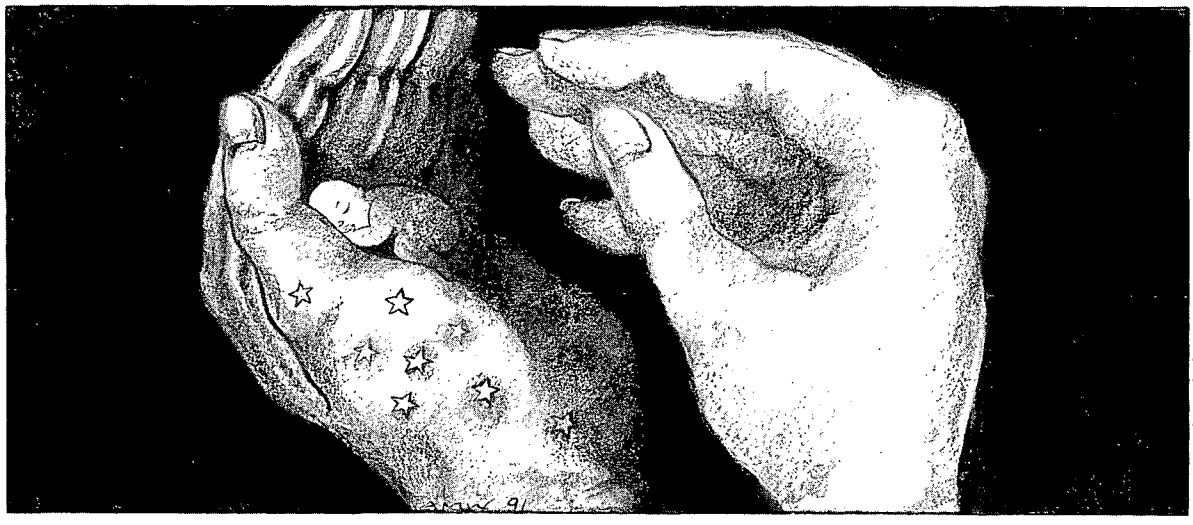
Social Security as Family Policy

by Christina F. Jeffrey



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Almost two years ago, Daniel Patrick Moynihan did the nation a great service by making Social Security safely controversial. Acknowledging the approaching problem of the huge baby boom retirement that will have to be supported by the smaller baby bust generation, Moynihan's plan would have eliminated the trust fund created by the 1983 Social Security Reform Act and put the system back on a pay-as-you-go basis. His primary reason for this move seemed to be to force Congress and the Bush administration into raising taxes to reduce the federal deficit instead of relying on surplus moneys from the Social Security Trust Fund.

The 1983 reform seemed to change the way Social Security was funded, from a pay-as-you-go system to one that allowed workers to contribute to their own retirement via the trust system. In point of fact, the system never changed at all. Since there is no obvious way for the government to "save" money, the system remains on a pay-as-you-go basis. Even Robert Myers, former deputy commissioner of the Social Security Administration and executive director of the National Commission on Social Security Reform, which in 1982-83 proposed the changes in Social Security financing, now endorses the Moynihan Plan. Myers says that the plan is "fiscally and economically sound, as well as intellectually honest in giving the public a clear view of the cost of the program and of the general budget situation."

Today's retirees did not "save" for their retirement by contributing to the Social Security system. The notion, widely held, is pure myth. Their contributions paid for their parents and grandparents. Looked at from a strictly actuarial point of view, they supported a small retirement population and paid very little in taxes. Today there is a large working population to support them and they are receiving back many more times what they paid in. Social Security has been a financial windfall for today's elderly.

But as David P. Fauri, a professor of social policy at Virginia Commonwealth University, puts it, actuarial equality was never the goal of Social Security; instead, it was intended to be a "social insurance" program that combined some of the features of a private pension with the government's ability to redistribute wealth. Given that absolute financial equity is not the goal of Social Security, today's elderly could be considered to have paid their dues in another way. They contributed to Social Security in the only way that truly insures future benefits (besides maintaining a strong economy)—they had children.

But it should also be pointed out that they had the government's cooperation in this—in the form of low interest rates for housing, the GI Bill for education, and an income tax exemption that allowed many to exempt all federal income taxes. Furthermore, other taxes—such as Social Security, state, and local—were low as well. Young people today are either not able (or maybe not willing) to raise large families. Where once a family, even a large family, could be middle class on one income, today it takes two. And with many more women now working, Social Security benefits have risen dramatically as even more money has been absorbed into the system. What was once supposed to be only a floor to prevent absolute poverty has become a major pension system.

What the Social Security system of the future is going to need, more than any other kind of contribution, is more workers to support today's workers when they retire. These

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Christina F. Jeffrey is an associate professor of political science and public administration at Kennesaw State College in Marietta, Georgia. A longer, footnoted version of this piece will appear in The Rockford Institute's The Family in America.

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additional workers will also be needed to keep the economy going. Already we are hearing calls from Washington to allow more generous immigration to solve this problem, but immigration brings its own problems. Since, for example, the success of the Social Security system depends on the willingness of young workers to pay for their parents' and grandparents' retirement, immigrants may be unwilling to pay high taxes to support others' parents. Thus an immigrant population large enough to help with the baby boom and bust problem might be more resistant to transgenerational support.

What is needed is a new baby boom, though many will oppose this idea. Feminists will argue that such a solution puts an unequal burden on women. Some environmentalists will be appalled at the temerity of a suggestion which runs counter to the orthodoxy that smaller is better. An April 19, 1991, story in the *Wall Street Journal* shows just how anti-child America has become. The story concerned a thriving Mormon family with 17 children. The mother of the family explains her desire for a large family by citing her church's belief that children bring joy. Irate letters to the editor followed. One writer added the cost of lost taxes, $9,758 from $34,850 worth of exemptions for the children, and complained about subsidizing this woman's joy. He also recommended a limit on deductions for "luxury families" and worried about the effect of such families on a stable population. Another writer suggested that if this couple had wanted such a large family they should have had two natural children and adopted 15. The only positive letter was equally telling, as Jessica R. Jacob, M.D., thanked the *Journal* for printing a story that paints large families in a good light. She added that she and her husband "are subject to daily expressions of disbelief at what many of our colleagues and acquaintances perceive as an excessive number of children." Dr. Jacob and her husband have six children.

But neither the original article nor any of the letters points out the tremendous contributions these children will likely make to society, including the taxes they will pay over a lifetime. In fact, the older children in large families no doubt pay much more in taxes than their parents are "collecting" in exemptions.

Realists will suggest that women will not go back to having large families when they have tasted the liberation of small families, and they may be correct. However, there are some trends that suggest otherwise. Most women who can afford to do so are choosing to stay at home with their children, at least when the children are young; and some actually enjoy doing so. Women today speak of staying at home with their children as a "luxury." Perhaps if more people could afford this luxury, more children would be born. Indeed, a national poll in 1987 showed a surprising 88 percent of women claiming that if they could afford to do so, they would prefer to stay home with their children.

One of the wonderful things about Social Security, if you listen to those who praise it, is that it frees the indigent aged from dependence on their own children. Another way of saying this is that it socializes the care of the elderly. But socialism is an inefficient system with gross disincentives built into it. The more you separate those who benefit from those who pay, the more beneficiaries you will have and the fewer payers. The economic maxim runs thus: the more you tax something the less you have of it, and the more you subsidize something the more you will get of that commodity.

The key to saving the Social Security system is to take advantage of this maxim and put it to work to benefit the system. Providing for future generations is not simply altruistic, it is necessary for the continuation of life in a civilized state. To employ Thomas Hobbes' felicitous phrase, without such a provision (among others) life becomes "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." Thus the older generation must provide for the existence and education of a younger generation that will ensure the survival of the society. Current efforts toward socializing this responsibility have resulted in many people choosing the option of letting others provide the children who will become the next generation. But, unfortunately, there simply are not enough "others," and what "others" there are are staggering under the heavy burden of a tax system that has shifted much more of the tax burden onto their already burdened shoulders. One of the incentives that people traditionally had for raising families was to provide for their own care when they grew too old to care for themselves. With Social Security, that incentive disappears. The country needs new pronatalist policies and incentives to raise responsible children. But what kind of incentives?

What I propose is to recognize parenthood for what it is, the most significant contribution to the Social Security system that a person can make, and to increase the financial benefits to parents as part of that recognition.

My first suggestion has already been proposed by Allan Carlson and endorsed by Gary Bauer, chairman of the Family Research Council. This is to return the income tax dependent exemption to its former value. Instead of the current $2,150 the exemption would need to be $8,260 to be worth what it was when it was originally instituted. The second suggestion is a new one. Upon employment, workers could designate a certain percentage of their Social Security payments to be assigned directly to a retired parent, grandparent, or guardian as a supplement to that person's retirement income; a kind of child bonus, if you will. Those workers who have spouses who are out of the workforce because they must care for small children or handicapped dependents could be allowed a second supplement that would go to a retired parent, grandparent, or guardian of the spouse. Additional refinements in the law would no doubt be needed, but essentially that is the proposal. Another possibility would be to reduce the primary income-earner's Social Security taxes by some percentage for each minor dependent. If the employer's share were also reduced by a comparable percentage, then an employer might view a family man or woman as a person who could be hired at a lower cost instead of as a person likely to have more distractions because they have children. This would be a particularly useful advantage for single parents. Other variations to reward parents could be considered instead of or in addition to these, such as allowing parents to retire earlier than nonparents.

There are several advantages associated with these schemes. First, the benefits will go to those who raise the

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children; of course, in order to benefit, recipients must *raise* children. Second, the United States will benefit economically and spiritually and educationally if our society is reoriented to the idea that children constitute a positive good. And finally, a clear connection between having children and receiving Social Security benefits would thereby be established. After all, if nobody has children, there will be no Social Security for anyone. Social Security is an intergenerational contract that seeks to take the place of the family as a means of providing security in old age. It equalizes parents and nonparents. But as has already been pointed out, this form of socialism, as every other, has its weakness, and the weakness comes when the burden on those who contribute most becomes too high and they cease contributing. This is what has happened today. There are people who would like to have more children, but the burdens have become too great and the rewards too few. (If this assumption is wrong, that there is no willingness to increase the birthrate, then this proposal as an attempt to increase fertility will fail, but the basic justice of it will remain.)

It is not expected or desired that people who do not want children will have them for financial reasons. The incentives should be large enough to help support a large family, but not so large as to try to serve as a temptation to people to breed for purely economic purposes. With this caveat in mind, is it fair to reward people for having children? Yes, for several reasons. First, as I have previously said, new workers are needed to support the economy and the dependent population, particularly the elderly. If children become workers, they are the essential contributors to their parents' retirement. Secondly, parents spend a great deal of money raising children. Current estimates exceed one hundred thousand dollars for raising a child to age 18. Third, parents are not usually able to save and invest very much for their retirement until children are grown, and therefore they are not in a position to accumulate as much for their retirement as childless couples. These provisions would compensate parents for the tremendous costs they incur and also, as a part of the law of the nation, tell a story to ourselves about what we as a community value.

There is one other objection to the above proposal that needs to be anticipated and answered. If Social Security is an intergenerational compact based on the myth that society has children and not families, why not eliminate it altogether and privatize retirement? Families would be strengthened, people would save for their own retirement, and unused retirement savings could be passed on to the next generation. The generations would become less isolated from each other. However, anyone observing recent events is compelled to conclude that Social Security seems to enjoy such powerful political support so as to render such a course impractical to follow. Yet modifying Social Security to make it sounder and more equitable may be politically palatable. In a recent nationwide poll of 519 adults (margin of error 4 percent, 95 times out of 100) conducted by Marketwise, Inc., of Charlotte, North Carolina, 90 percent of those surveyed disagreed with a statement that changes in Social Security must never be considered, although 88 percent wanted current retirees fully protected so that changes would not adversely affect those already drawing benefits.

Representative John Porter, also responding to the Moynihan challenge, has proposed the following change in Social Security financing along these lines: excess Social Security funds, meaning those remaining from workers' contributions after all benefits are paid, would be remitted to workers for deposit into a kind of IRA that he calls an Individual Social Security Retirement Account, ISSRA. This system could be combined with an effort to privatize Social Security, allowing each worker complete control of his or her ISSRA. This plan is appealing in that it further de-socializes Social Security, but it does nothing to promote childraising since nonparents would still be in a better position to earn more income and thus increase their accounts. Nevertheless, the Porter Plan does hold the promise of certain potential benefits for families, such as the possibility to tap ISSRAs for housing down payments or college tuition.

Several other recommendations to relieve the financial pressures on families were included in the final report of the National Commission on Children. For example, instead of pushing for parity in the value of the dependent exemption, the commission recommended a $1,000 per child tax refund. This money would be available whether or not the parents were employed and paying taxes and would be given regardless of the amount of family income. Its worth to a family in the 15 percent tax bracket would be the equivalent of a $6,666 exemption. The logic behind this recommendation, according to commission member Allan Carlson, is to make it perfectly clear that children are a resource whether their parents are employed or unemployed, rich or poor.

The proposals set forth here, to tie Social Security benefits to workers' most important nonfinancial contributions, meaning new workers for the system, are offered not to solve the problems of that system alone. Rather, in making recommendations to strengthen Social Security by strengthening the family and promoting larger families, all of the important institutions of society may be strengthened as well. It is hoped that by modifying the Social Security system to make it more just and more pro-natalist, the system can not only be preserved but can serve as a model of how to rethink our country's family policy in general. ◇

Archilochus: Two Fragments

by Jack Flavin

i.

She held a sprig of myrtle picked for her delight
And the fresh beauty of a budding rose. Her long
Hair made a shadow down her shoulders and her back.

ii.

Fox knows many tricks, but
Hedgehog knows one great one.

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Truth or Consequences

by Theodore Pappas

"I don't know where democracy will end, but it can't end in a quiet old age."
—Klemens von Metternich

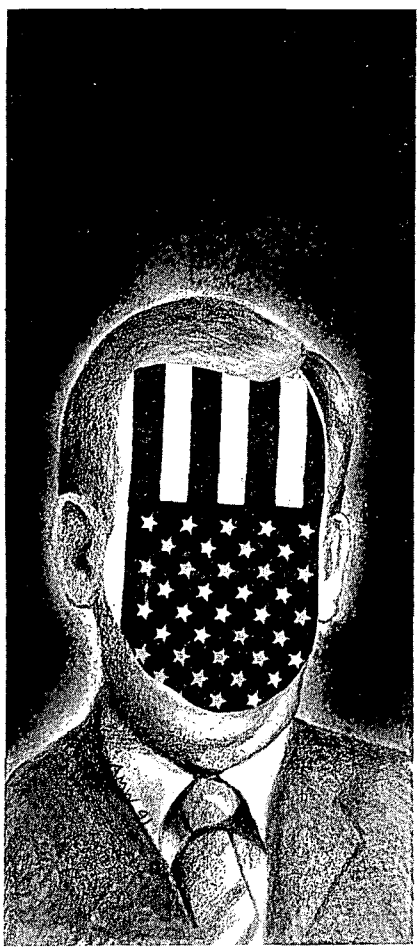
The Illusion of a Conservative Reagan Revolution
by Larry M. Schwab
New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers; 243 pp., $29.95

Minority Party: Why Democrats Face Defeat in 1992 and Beyond
by Peter Brown
Washington: Regnery Gateway; 350 pp., $21.95

◆

Rowland Evans and Robert Novak were among the first political commentators to designate the 1980 election of Ronald Reagan a watershed date in American political history. From their perspective in 1981, "What was so quickly started then in regulatory relaxation, spending cuts and tax cut proposals was just the beginning. . . . Even the Moral Majority's social issues would be pursued in time." John Chubb and Paul Peterson agreed, and in 1985 in *The New Direction in American Politics* argued, "The American political system, during the presidency of Ronald Reagan, has been transformed to an extent unknown since the days of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. . . . Only rarely in American history has the political system broken as sharply with governing customs to address festering national problems or to confront social and economic issues head-on." Even as late as 1988, it was possible to find someone like Martin Anderson to suggest that "what Reagan and his comrades have done is to shape America's policy agenda well into the twenty-first century."

What all these writers have in common is their adherence to the Reagan revolution thesis, which goes something like this. The nearly fifty years of liberal policies that the United States had experienced since 1932 came to an abrupt end in 1980, when a massive conservative shift in public opinion occurred and produced Ronald Reagan's landslide victory and the first Republican Senate majority in over twenty-five years. Reagan became one of the most popular Presidents in modern times and used the new conservative mood of the country to institute dramatic and lasting changes in public policies and party politics.



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

With the Reagan era over and accurate statistical data on the decade now available, enter Larry Schwab to chastise all such prognosticators of political change and to unveil the Reagan legacy in all its contradictory splendor. Schwab is a professor of political science at John Carroll University, and his book is a dry but often convincing demolition of the Reagan revolution thesis. He argues that Reagan was neither one of the most popular Presidents nor a great legislative leader; there was no conservative shift in the 1980 election and no party realignment over the decade; and although reform was attempted in the first eighteen months of Reagan's presidency, there remained no lasting change in the federal system.

According to Schwab, Reagan's election and reelection were not mandates for conservatism. Reagan's landslide victory in 1980 was not so much the result of a fundamental shift in public opinion or political ideology as the fervent expression of the country's frustration with Jimmy Carter's handling of foreign and economic affairs. Regarding the 1984 election, Schwab cites the Survey Research Center's conclusion that the average voter "was about halfway between the two candidates on government services, aid to women, relations with Russia, jobs, and standard of living guarantee." In 1984, as in the 1980 election, the economy was the factor determining Reagan's victory. The recession hit early in Reagan's first term, dropping his popularity dramatically. But economic recovery was well underway in the year before the 1984 election, and it is always the year directly before the election, not the economic developments early in a President's term, that plays the critical role in any national

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election.

Schwab never tires of pointing out that, contrary to national memory, Ronald Reagan was not one of the country's most popular Presidents. He had only a 60 percent approval rating after seven months in office, compared to President Bush's 70 percent. By the end of his first year, Reagan's popularity had dropped to 49 percent. Although his ratings improved in late 1983 and 1984 with the economic recovery well under way and with his victory over Walter Mondale, his ratings again ebbed in 1986 and 1987 with revelations of the Iran-Contra scandal. His overall approval rating, in comparison with the ratings of all other Presidents since 1932, places him well behind Kennedy, Roosevelt, Eisenhower, and even Johnson, with Nixon, Carter, Truman, and Ford slightly trailing Reagan's average rating of 52 percent.

Schwab adds that, since Reagan was not conspicuously popular, it is hardly surprising that his eight years in office failed to produce a party realignment or make the Republicans the dominant party. On the contrary, the Democrats' sway had never been more complete. By the end of the decade the majority of senators, representatives, governors, state legislators, and big city mayors were Democrats; the Republicans, for instance, controlled only eight state legislatures in 1989. Even the Republican Senate victories in the 1980's were based on special circumstances and not on a shift in national voting patterns. The Democrats won well over a majority of the combined national vote in the elections of 1980, 1982, and 1984, in which the Republicans won a majority of the seats; the Republicans, however, managed to win 15 of the 20 seats in the ten states smallest in population.

But Schwab hits his stride in showing how the role of the federal government expanded rather than contracted in the 1980's. It is an old story, but one that still rankles conservatives. Reagan not only failed to dismantle the departments of energy and education but even added a new department of veterans affairs. Price support systems — in the sugar, tobacco, peanut, honey, cotton, dairy, and rice industries — expanded and flourished. What significant deregulation did occur in the 1980's had been initiated under Jimmy Carter. The United States became, for the first time, a debtor nation under Reagan. He opposed the right of states to control their own National Guard troops, failed to transfer federal lands to the states, and failed to block passage of the important Grove City College civil rights bill. The New Right agenda of banning abortion and legalizing prayer in public schools never came close to enactment. Taxes rose substantially in the 1980's, and he approved two of the largest tax increases, the 1982 tax law and the 1983 Social Security reform bill, in American history.

The chief irony of the era is that the one area in which Reagan did reduce the role of the federal government (and set a precedent for future administrations) was defense: Reagan will go down in history as the President who initiated in the mid-1980's the greatest military cutback since 1945, and one which continues apace today. As Schwab writes, "The defense budget would have been larger at the end of the 1980's than it actually was if the budget had increased at the rate proposed by Jimmy Carter and Walter Mondale."

Schwab concludes that, rhetoric notwithstanding, Reaganism in practice had nothing whatsoever to do with federalist principle or with a return to the traditional bourgeois values of the Old Right. Reaganism meant merely the legitimization "in the federal budget and American society" of the New Deal-Great Society state.

There are flaws and omissions in Schwab's study. First, although taxes may have risen in the aggregate over the course of the decade, Reagan drastically reduced the tax rates for corporations and the affluent and paved the way for the new plutocracy, the second Gilded Age. Kevin Phillips, in *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, may have misrepresented the extent to which Middle Americans actually suffered under Reaganomics, but the first half of his thesis — that the ranks of the rich swelled under Reagan — is beyond dispute. Yuppies, *Wall Street*, *Bonfire of the Vanities*, *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*, the stock market crash, the junk bond boom, the skyrocketing luxury sales, the emergence into common usage of the word "billionaire" — none of these phenomena of the decade occurred in a vacuum, and yet no account of them is anywhere to be found in Schwab's book.

Secondly, Schwab's social-scientific approach to the topic limits his ability to notice elements in Reagan's electoral appeal that are not easily distinguishable by quantitative means. In his analysis of the 1984 election, he cites the Survey Research Center's conclusion that there was little difference between the candidates on many issues. From this he argues, "If the recession had occurred in 1984 rather than in 1982, Reagan probably would have lost the 1984 election." That voters could have chosen Reagan over Mondale for reasons unrelated to the recession is a possibility that Schwab never entertains. However, the same study includes a key sentence that he quotes but without comment: "Only on aid to minorities was the average response significantly closer to Reagan's position."

What Schwab fails to understand is what Peter Brown sees so clearly: that the Republicans have long known how to appeal to Middle Americans who feel squeezed between an irresponsible political elite and an avaricious lower class that the elite caters to at their expense. Donald Warren termed these citizens "Middle American Radicals," and it was they who filled the ranks of Nixon's "New Majority," who backed George Wallace, and who comprised the New Right that so enthusiastically supported Ronald Reagan in the 1980's.

Peter Brown has written a shockingly honest book "about the forgotten middle class," about how winning the White House requires understanding Middle Americans and, "for the Democrats, regaining their allegiance." Brown is a seasoned political commentator for Scripps Howard News Service, and he makes it clear from the start that he is no apostate from the Democratic faith. He has written a book about Democrats for Democrats in the hope of helping them regain the presidency, but he expects harsh reaction from the party faithfuls. "For those Democrats who will find the book infuriating, I can only say that I write what I perceive as reality. Think of me as a physician examining a patient and giving his professional opinion. I am

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offering a tough diagnosis and recommending tough medicine as the only road to recovery. That is how the book is intended—not to harm the party, but to help it." Brown also realizes that, because of his frankness about the politics of race, some critics will undoubtedly brand his book "racist." "I hope not," he says, "for those who do will be failing to hear the voices of the American middle class."

Brown argues that middle-class white voters—once the bedrock of the Democratic Party—have grown to resent the way the party now runs roughshod over their needs and desires, anxieties and aspirations in an attempt to court blacks, gays, greens, and feminists. What the party has entirely missed is that Middle Americans have grown frustrated with a culture that no longer honors individual responsibility and moral accountability. They have lost patience with the way criminals can blame their crimes on a bad childhood, employees can demand jobs on the basis of race rather than skills, and with the way, in Brown's words, the "Democrats view their constituents as victims: blacks, feminists, gays, and workers are always the victims of discrimination by the white-male-heterosexual-business-dominated culture." Brown's argument gives credence to Kevin Phillips' 1982 thesis in *Post-Conservative America* that the middle class is undergoing a kind of radicalization.

The strength of Brown's book lies in his scores of interviews with frustrated Middle Americans. The reader meets Louise Renaud, whose experiences as a teacher at Detroit's Kettering High School in the 1970's led to her break with the Democratic Party. With a salary under ten thousand dollars at the time, "I would see the kids, whose families were on AFDC, walking around in designer jeans, silk shirts, alligator shoes. And I'm breaking my buns. What the hell is going on?" And there is Geri Suma of suburban Detroit, who upon learning that the Democrats' forced busing plan meant that her child would not be allowed to attend the elementary school down the block but instead was going to be bused to an inner-city school miles away, said "At that point I could see the way things were changing. . . . Busing made me begin to think the Democratic party wasn't for us." "For two decades," writes Brown, Democratic leaders have tried to pretend that the feelings of the Geri Sumas and Louise Renauds "don't exist, or that if they do, they belong to bigoted people who don't deserve to have their views aired."

Brown points out that not all Democrats have been blind to this exodus of Middle Americans. Many members of the moderate Democratic Leadership Council have recognized this problem for years, but like Democratic pollster Stanley Greenberg—whom the party hired to study its poor showing in Michigan in 1984—they have had little influence on the direction of the national party. In the course of his study Greenberg brought together some three dozen Democrats of Macomb County, Michigan, who had voted for Reagan. As Brown describes the scene, Greenberg set the tone of the meeting by reading a quotation from Robert Kennedy, whom Greenberg and fellow Democrats assumed these Roman Catholic voters would hold in high esteem. The quoted passage was RFK's call for Americans to honor their special obligation to blacks whose forefathers had experienced slavery. As Brown notes, Greenberg's opening went over like a lead balloon.

> "That's bulls—t," shouted one participant. "No wonder they killed him," said another. "I'm fed up with it," chimed in a third. Greenberg was astonished at their vehemence. . . . The votes for Reagan among these traditional Democrats, Greenberg reported, stemmed from a "profound disillusionment, a loss of faith in the Democratic party," a sense that "the Democratic party no longer responded with genuine feeling to the vulnerabilities and burdens of the average middle-class person. Instead the party and government were preoccupied with the needs of minorities. . . . They advanced spending programs that offered no appreciable or visible benefit" for middle-class people.

But the party's national leaders refused to take Greenberg's findings to heart, treating the study "like a mistress at a family funeral." Some of them "rationalized that the school busing furor in Macomb had made it atypically racist. Others hoped it would pass, laying it to the phenomenon of Reagan's personal popularity."

Brown concludes that, in order to regain the White House, the Democratic Party must not only adopt a platform more conducive to the white majority and to middle-class needs and values—not just shake free of Jesse Jackson's delusion that the party's future lies with the registration and courtship of more minorities and poor blacks—it must rid itself of the perception that it is the party of the Northeast. Brown reminds Democrats that most Middle Americans see the Northeast as symbolic of the nation's past and its problems and not its future and potential. "This combination—the party's Northeastern orientation and its refusal to change its outmoded message—has kept [Democratic] presidential candidates from being able to communicate with middle-class voters."

The prospects, however, both for the Democratic Party and the voting public, are bleak. Despite Brown's sage analysis and advice, the Democrats have chosen New York City—the cultural bane of Middle America—as the site for its 1992 national convention. Nor have the Democratic candidates thus far announced shown much willingness to adopt the fundamental changes that Brown suggests are needed for capturing the White House. Only one national figure has shown serious interest in an agenda similar to that outlined by Brown, and it comes not from a Democrat but from a Republican standing on an America First platform: Patrick Buchanan. ◈

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The Siege of Baltimore

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

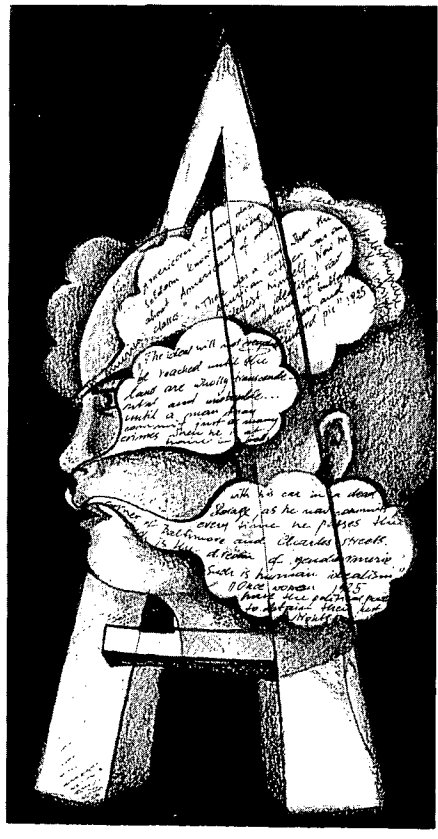
"Newspapers have degenerated, they may now be absolutely relied upon."
—Oscar Wilde

The Impossible H.L. Mencken: A Selection of His Best Newspaper Stories
Edited by Marion Elizabeth Rodgers
With a foreword by Gore Vidal
New York: Anchor/Doubleday; 707 pp., $27.50

◆

It is 36 years since the gaseous incorporeal soul of Henry Louis Mencken, summoned before the throne of Him in Whom he for 76 years had expressed unbelief, presumably uttered the words the fleshly Mencken had rehearsed for such unlikely occasion: "Gentlemen, I was wrong!" In the interval between 1956 and the present, the art and ideas—and through them the personality—of the defunct Mencken continue to withstand time, political correctness, the assaults of hostile journalistic successors like Garry Wills and the late Henry Fairlie, and the more insulting attentions of those sing-along-with-Mitch imitators whose paragon is R. Emmett Tyrrell of the *American Spectator*.

Still, it is my opinion that nobody yet has got H.L. Mencken right. For instance, Fairlie, in an essay he wrote to commemorate the Mencken centennial in 1980, dismissed his subject for having been merely a superior example of the personalizing writer who in Fairlie's view typifies the American journalist; while Louis D. Rubin, Jr., writing for the *Sewanee Review*'s summer 1991 number, professed to find only "mystery" in the supposedly contradictory attitudes upon which Mencken's work rests. It has become a commonplace that nobody writing as Mencken wrote could be published in the American prints of today, by which is meant chiefly that to refer as outspokenly to Negroes, Jews, and lady politicians as H.L. Mencken regularly did is not only *verboten* but a one-way ticket



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

to that instant obscurity that most working journalists cannot afford, and all of them abhor. But Mencken's readiness for insult is not what primarily defines him, and neither is his alleged subjectivism. It is possible to be much less objective than Henry Mencken was, while sounding a great deal more so. What characterizes Mencken as a journalist is his ambivalence, an ambivalence that is indispensable equipment for the so-called creative artist and was common to most journalists in an era when novelists and even poets began their literary careers as newspaper reporters. In our own time—the heyday of the news commentator as secular guru, unelected politician, political scientist, unaccredited professor, and Keeper of the Conscience of America—any ambivalence is anathema, particularly to political columnists who regard acceptance of the fundamental ambiguity of human life as conduct unbecoming a professional.

In his youth Mencken experimented with the short story form and published a small volume of poetry, *Ventures Into Verse*. Quite sensibly, he abandoned both fiction and poetry and in middle age effected discreet raids on bookstores for the purpose of seizing, buying, and destroying copies of *Ventures*, which national renown had elevated to the status of collectors' items. In due course he redirected his literary talent to criticism, but the germ of the creative artist continued to circulate in his system. As a newspaper reporter writing for an age vastly more literate than the present, Mencken saw, smelt, felt, heard, and touched as the novelist sees, smells, feels, hears, and touches; like the novelist also he sought to place the reality these sensations suggested to him within his work. There is none of what Henry James called "weak specificity" in Mencken's writing; the background and the characters looming against it are presented dramatically, in broad strokes and in detail. This is true especially in the reportorial pieces, such as the famous Baltimore *Evening Sun* columns describing the Monkey Trial in Dayton, Tennessee, and the national political conventions, but a poetic concreteness is discernible in the commentary as well. What Mencken gives his reader is less the "news," strictly considered, than the era and the society in which the "news events" he covered occurred, and the "issues" sparked by such events. This is why his "journalism" lasts, why it continues to be read today in spite of the unpopularity of many or most of his opinions. I do not believe it is an exaggeration to say that in Mencken's work, American civilization between 1900 and 1948 (when he suffered the disabling stroke that ended his career) is embodied as pungently and completely as the civilization of Victorian England is in the novels of Trollope, or that of the American South from the

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Civil War to the Second World War in those of Faulkner. That is to say, Mencken did not subjectivize the American scene, he *recreated* it—exactly what every literary artist of the first rank has always done, and always will do.

It is an inherent weakness of the present anthology that Marion Rodgers has restricted herself to reprinting the material as Mencken wrote it for original publication in the Baltimore *Evening Sun*, the Chicago *Sunday Tribune*, the New York *Evening Mail*, and the New York *American*, though he rewrote many of the best of these articles for the *Prejudices* volumes, where they achieved immortality. Mencken typically produced his newspaper copy "at a gallop, mud-spattered, high in oath" as William Manchester remarked, then added a scattering of pencil marks to the first and only draft before sending it along to the copy desk. In a career that spanned nearly half a century and added millions of words to the national archives, he inevitably wrote too much and too quickly, so that reading through even this modest tome of seven hundred pages I experienced certain horrible moments when I felt that I really was encountering the hollow thumping of Tyrrell's prose. But Mencken at his best was wonderful, and there is enough good writing available here not only to make sampling it an invigorating experience but to inspire new thoughts concerning a writer closely familiar to me since adolescence.

Mencken remarked in the 1920's, when the *New York Times* was calling him the most influential private citizen in America, that should it ever become apparent to him that he had somehow produced an effect upon his day he would jump through the nearest window. He was not, he liked to insist demurely, a constructive critic: what would he have said to the proposition that he was a genuine American prophet! We need of course not worry about what he would have said, since he is an Angel of Gawd now and knows better. But the man who—again in the 20's—predicted formally that the United States would blow up in a hundred years deserves respect today, even if his forecast was a little off; for once, it appears, he let down his guard and a spirit of uncharacteristic optimism seized him. Because the United States has already blown up; seventy years after Mencken's prophecy, we are surviving more or less miserably beneath the rubble.

An astonishing number of the evils of Mencken's own time, carefully noted and helpfully set down by him, are with us today in a form that is more highly developed still, and hence more virulent. I offer a few examples of his prophetic powers:

On the future of the United States of America: "Either we must soon see the glorious shores of Utopia, or the whole argosy will be wrecked." (1936)

On the future of American democracy: "[Judicious men] warned that giving the vote to incompetent, despairing and envious people would breed demagogues to rouse and rally them, and that the whole democratic process would thus be converted into organized pillage and rapine." (1940)

On the Democratic Party: "The plain fact is that the Democratic party is scarcely a party at all, but simply a loose federation of discordant minorities, chiefly devoted to civil war." (1928)

On class in America: ". . . Americans of one class seldom know anything about Americans of other classes." (1928)

On American idealism: "There was a time when the American citizen was an idealist himself. Now he is only idealism's raw material, as a cow is the raw material of butter, ice-cream, and custard pie." (1925)

On government regulation of the citizenry: "The ideal will not be reached until the laws are wholly transcendental and unobeyable . . . until a man may commit just as many crimes when he is at home in bed, with his car in dead storage, as he now commits every time he passes the corner of Baltimore and Charles Streets. Such is the dream of *gendarmerie*. Such is human idealism." (1925)

On the American globalist impulse: "[Henry Ford] insists upon . . . laying down laws . . . for the government of . . . natural inhabitants [of foreign countries]. This is what Europe understands by Americanism, by Americanization. And this is what it fears." (1925)

On the woman of tomorrow: "Once women have the political power to obtain their just rights, they will begin to lose their old power to obtain special privileges by emotional appeals. Men, facing them squarely at last, will consider them anew, not as romantic political and social invalids, to be coddled and caressed, but as free competitors in a harsh and abominable world." (1918)

On Abraham Lincoln: "[H]e has become one of the national deities, and a realistic examination of him is thus no longer possible." (1931)

On jazz: "It might just as well be made by a machine . . . some day, I suppose, the experiment of so making it will be tried." (1934)

LIBERAL ARTS

BLOND BANTER

Though ethnic and racial jokes have been purged from "correct" discourse, blond jokes have reportedly proliferated. According to a recent *New York Times* article by Dirk Johnson of Denver, the banished jokes have been recycled, substituting blonds for the previous targets. Some sociologists interpret this phenomenon to be a backlash against WASP culture, since blonds are usually Caucasians of Northern European descent. But as Johnson concludes, no one is rushing to their defense since they are "not a class of people that has known much discrimination in this country." As Denver radio show host Mike Rosen observes, "blonds are not a certified victim group," so "jokes about blonds can be told with relative impunity."

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On dancing to jazz: "[A] puerile writhing on a narrow spot." (1934)

On letting the Old World go to Hell in its own way: Mencken was never more farseeing, perhaps, than when he contended that Germany, not England, deserved to win the Great War. The Teutons are at least as civilized a people as the British, he argued, and maybe more so. Had the demon Kaiser actually put the Brits to rout, the balance of power in Europe would probably have been more stable in the postwar period than the British-American victory ensured; there would likely have been no Hitler, and we would surely not be witnessing today the dangerously chaotic situation in Eastern Europe as the absurd peace treaty imposed upon the Central Powers by Herr Prof. Dr. Wilson ("the perfect model of a Christian cad") is finally undone.

Puritanism—the chief cultural inheritance of what Mencken called "the American of Anglo-Saxon descent" and what has been known since the 1950's as the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant, or WASP—was his life-long preeminent bane, the object of his highest scorn, the butt of his severest satire. For him, Puritanism was much more than the sickening fear that "someone, somewhere, is having a good time"; it was the lust for control, for the modification of individual and collective behavior in service to an idealism that had become detached from all reality and reattached to a stubborn belief in "the palpably not true." In Mencken's estimation, truth, to the Puritan, was a matter of intention coupled with incantation: if it were desirable that a thing should be true, and if enough good men repeated often enough that it *was* true, and then proceeded, day in and day out, to act upon the assumption, then that thing would actually *become* true.

By the action of the Holy Spirit broadcasting itself from Beacon Hill, Transcendentalism was conceived immaculately. So was Progressivism. So was the New Nationalism of Herbert Croly and Woodrow Wilson. So was Prohibitionism. So were the Volstead and Mann Acts. All types of social work and every form of Uplift and Reform were likewise the hideous spawn of Puritanism, whose attempts forcibly to stifle truth and to promote error reached beyond the social and political fora to embrace the intellectual and artistic ones as well. "[T]he prevailing American view of the world and its mysteries is still a moral one," Mencken wrote in a long essay, "Puritanism as a Literary Force," "and no other human concern gets half the attention that is endlessly lavished upon the problem of conduct, particularly that of the other fellow. . . . The Puritan's utter lack of aesthetic sense, his distrust of all romantic emotion, his unmatchable intolerance of opposition, his unbreakable belief in his own bleak and narrow views, his savage cruelty of attack, his lust for relentless and barbarous persecution . . . have put an almost intolerable burden upon the exchange of ideas in the United States."

Beginning in the 1960's, only a few years after his death, predictions began to be heard concerning the "decline of the WASP" in America; such rumors of a future enlightenment were greeted with many satisfied smirks and a few triumphant guffaws. From a strictly sociological standpoint they have perhaps been substantiated by the subsequent march of history, but from another point of view they have been vitiated completely. According to this perspective, the WASP during the quarter-century immediately past has triumphed as never before in the history of his race, although the result is the ruin of the country that his ancestors so hopefully established. To put it simply, he has succeeded in converting all other racial, ethnic, and religious groups in America to Puritanism by convincing them that they need for their own success and happiness to become as moralistic, intrusive, reformist, self-conscious, intolerant, and bigoted—in a word, Puritanical—as himself. That the result of this great moral victory is turmoil, divisiveness, the wholesale abuse of law, a vast increase in religious rivalry and racial hatred, enmity and distrust between the sexes, a burgeoning neo-Prohibitionist movement, and a general breakdown in social cohesiveness that may in the coming decades end in actual civil war does not trouble him in the least. How Mencken would have relished this consummate irony! And how he would have enjoyed the final show!

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Truth in Empire

by E. Christian Kopff

Caligula: The Corruption of Power
by Anthony A. Barrett
New Haven and London: Yale University Press; 334 pp., $27.50

Claudius
by Barbara Levick
New Haven and London: Yale University Press; 256 pp., $25.00

Nero: The End of a Dynasty
by Miriam T. Griffin
New Haven and London: Yale University Press; 320 pp., $25.00

◆

He arrived at the highest seat of power late in life, after a career that most considered inappropriate for a world leader. He consolidated his popularity by the successful invasion of a small island. Although his influence on the structure of government was momentous, he was mocked as sleepy and forgetful. His enemies said his wife had too much influence over him and even published scabrous stories of her unfaithfulness.

Of course, I am talking about the Emperor Claudius. These books on the early Roman emperors might tempt some people into making irresponsible analogies with our own day. They are well researched and clearly written. They provide good introductions for graduate students into the scholarly problems of their subjects. Griffin has an interesting discussion of Nero's problems with the imperial system, while Levick reveals an occasional dry wit.

These authors are well aware of the problems inherent in their task. "Recent research," Griffin notes, "tends to frown on the composition of imperial lives, favouring instead works that illuminate the general structure of the imperial system and the long processes that explain the development of the Empire." There are good reasons for this skepticism. Our ancient sources include the biographer Suetonius and the political historian Tacitus, authors of two well-written and carefully researched pictures of the early emperors. Both represent the standard upper-class (or senatorial) attitude towards the emperors who succeeded Augustus, presenting them as immoral psychotics who ran the Roman world into the ground.

But the archaeological evidence presents a very different picture. Here we see the empire as one of the most successful governments in history, one that brought peace and prosperity to an area that stretched from Spain to Syria, from the Rhine to the Atlas Mountains of North Africa. People could travel safely and without passports from Greece to modern Turkey, from Israel to Libya. Today, tourists can travel a hundred miles into the Sahara Desert to visit Roman villas and see the remains of aqueducts and amphitheaters. The ruins of Roman cities in the Near East tell the same story of lost prosperity. The people of the Mediterranean dreamed for a millennium of restoring this prosperous and creative society. Its provincial upper class willingly gave of its wealth for buildings, literature, and popular entertainment.

The popular memory of the emperors was also far different from the senatorial version. Poor people placed flowers on Nero's grave every year. Rebels against Rome sought popular backing by claiming to be Nero, or a descendant of his. How could misfits preside over such long-lived peace and prosperity? Is there something amiss with the upper-class story told so well by Tacitus and Suetonius?

Nero, for instance, presided over triumphs in domestic and foreign policy and a literary and artistic renaissance. Our senatorial sources concentrate on portraying him as the murderer of his (adopted) father, Claudius, and lover of his mother. One does not have to read far in the studies by J.G. Frazer and René Girard to notice that these are standard accusations against the victims of lynching. He was criticized for being silly, uncultured (although he had published books on the history of the Etruscans), and under the thumb of his freedmen and his (promiscuous) wives. The parallels with President Reagan are no accident. Both men are attacked for being good monarchs: protecting ordinary people from an irresponsible upper class.

Barbara Levick once makes an explicit reference to President Reagan. Did Claudius really know of the conspiracy that ended with the fall of Caligula and his own ascent to the throne, but slyly pretended to be sleepily ignorant of it? "The technique, disreputable, essentially infantile, but useful and adopted by others — by Henry II and Elizabeth against internal threats (1170 and 1587) and by Reagan in the U.S.A. against Iran and Nicaragua — is that of allowing others to act or engineering them into it, while the principal continues 'ignorant' of what is going on." Their enemies, who portrayed Claudius and Reagan as silly and incompetent, had then to watch both leaders manipulating their negative images to avoid responsibility for literal or figurative coups.

The enormous mass of modern bibliography appears to have swamped Professors Barrett, Levick, and Griffin before they could adequately confront the upper-class hatred of rulers who presided over such peace and prosperity. Under the Republic, Rome had united first Italy and then the entire Mediterranean. During the second century B.C. the restraints on the Roman upper class collapsed, and the elite indulged in an orgy of foreign interventionism and welfarist domestic policies that nearly wrecked the Mediterranean. Augustus restored constraints on the political and economic elites through a monarchy. For 200 years after his death the empire enjoyed unparalleled prosperity and creativity, to the Senate's disgust. Was it better for ordinary people to try to return to the Middle Republic or to accept the monarchy, as long as the emperor protected them? The average American faces a similar dilemma today. Our former Republic distinguished by limited government, noninterventionist foreign policy, and the free exercise of religion is gone. Should we

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attempt to restore it against all odds, or tolerate the new monarchs — Presidents, we call them — as long as they protect our children and our property from the worst ravages of the American upper class? It is a question that Tacitus asked, and one illumined not so much by modern bibliography as by the silent pondering of our unquiet hearts.

E. Christian Kopff teaches Greek and Latin at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Dumb, Dumber, Dumbest

by Gregory J. Sullivan

BAD: Or, the Dumbing of America
by Paul Fussell
New York: Summit Books; 201 pp., $19.00

◆

There are two — equally indispensable — Paul Fussells: one is the erudite professor of English (at the University of Pennsylvania) who is the author of such brilliant studies as *The Great War and Modern Memory*; the other is the scalding critic of American pretension who writes such astute books as *Class: A Guide Through the American Status System*. Either one is worthy of our closest attention, and it happens that the latter is on display in this latest work, which is an alphabetized search-and-destroy mission over the vulgar terrain of American culture and mores.

BAD — as distinguished from merely bad, which has always been with us — is a (late) 20th-century phenomenon. "To achieve real BAD," writes Mr. Fussell, "you have to have the widest possible gap between what is said about a thing and what the thing actually is, as experienced by bright, disinterested, and modest people." Needless to say, America offers a cornucopia of possibilities to illustrate this theme, and Mr. Fussell covers the most egregious available.

To be sure, the targets of Mr. Fussell's vituperation are not new, but his wit and aesthetic perspicacity are rare indeed. For example, in his analysis of BAD architecture, he says, "Architecture, the most visible and unignorable human performance, is the place where people most publicly derive their understanding of themselves, and contemporary Americans have great trouble achieving that frank, unshowy Swiftian simplicity. . . . Straight lines, inevitable in the steel, aluminum, and glass boxes which now pass for buildings, are death to the imagination." Mr. Fussell has clearly hit the mark:

> Equality is one of the ideas glorified by the new architecture, and that might be a good thing, but this equality is the equality of ignorance, a celebration of the assumption that no one has sufficient experience or learning to enjoy the allusive exercise required by traditional architectural details like balustrades, crockets, finials, metopes, or triglyphs. The current architecture implicitly patronizes its users and audiences.

BAD has worked its way into virtually all the interstices of American life: the atrocious condition of deregulated airlines, engineering that is designed so poorly that it benefits only plaintiffs' lawyers when it inevitably collapses, and, of course, language. The flight from simplicity and clarity in the use of language is a manifestation of class anxiety. Mr. Fussell observes, "Pretentiousness and euphemism are . . . the stigmata of verbal BAD": thus, rain becomes "shower activity," a pen becomes a "writing instrument." Curiously, however, Mr. Fussell neglects to mention the wretched jargon that emanates from the academy. This omission is something of a surprise, for Mr. Fussell is one of the few academicians still writing in English, and surely he must take offense at the work of his colleagues.

In his penultimate chapter, "The Dumbing of America," Mr. Fussell sees dumbness rampant, reaching even into the professions. "[I]t's now no surprise," he notes, "to hear a partner in a law firm complain that the products of even the best law schools he interviews can't speak or write articulately, let alone eloquently — these are young people unable in today's TV and visual atmosphere to perceive that the law is about little more than language precisely construed and effectively deployed." In fact, to read a legal brief or trial manuscript often means enduring a deluge of malapropisms, bungled clichés, and pure vapor.

Mr. Fussell attributes a large part of our dumbing to television and "the collapse of the public secondary school." ("When was a truant officer last seen?" he wonders.) Moreover, much more is at stake — as many thoughtful people intuit — than the mere decline in American economic life. "Even admitting some disagreement about the precise reasons, one thing is clear: a minor cost of the dumbing is the transfer of American economic power to Japan. A major cost is the wiping-out of the amenity and nuance and complexity and charm that makes a country worth living in."

Mr. Fussell's assault on American BAD is broad, but it is slightly disappointing that he spends so much time

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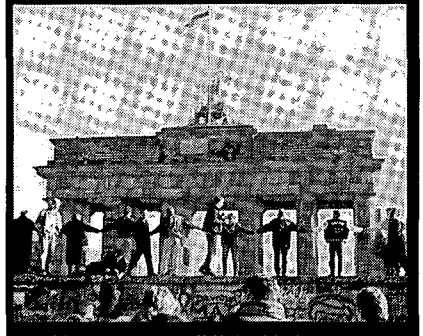

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excoriating the more popular aspects of culture. In his analysis of BAD magazines, for instance, Mr. Fussell is rightly harsh in his view toward such publications as *Connoisseur* and *Architectural Digest*. But what about the pretensions and unreadability of various intellectual journals? If BAD has a home, it most surely is found in a great deal of the nonsense that passes for literary and cultural criticism these days.

Mr. Fussell is entitled to select his subject and its scope, and to argue with that selection is to quibble. If you are looking for a robust jeremiad to read, say, on a plane into which you have been crammed (a product, says Mr. Fussell, of "the rapid proletarianization of air travel after the Second World War"), peruse *BAD*. You will then realize that your disgust at the condition of your country has been properly cultivated.

Gregory J. Sullivan is a law school student at Seton Hall University.

The Rediscovery of Science

by M.D. Aeschliman

The Purpose of It All
by Stanley L. Jaki
Washington: Regnery Gateway; 294 pp., $10.95

◆

Despite Stanley L. Jaki's distinguished and protean career, his books are not often reviewed in our most prominent cultural journals. The best response of the progressive scientistic establishment seems to be to ignore his work as much as possible, in the hope that such neglect will doom it. Books by feminist witches, New Age gurus, "gay" liberators, and unrepentant Harvard Marxists can all be reviewed in the pages of the *Washington Post Book World* and the *New York Times Book Review*, but not the writings of a learned philosopher and historian of science.

Jaki's new book, *The Purpose of It All*, is the text of the eight lectures he delivered under the auspices of the Farmington Institute for Christian Studies while he was visiting fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, in 1989-1990. For at least twenty-five years, since the publication of *The Relevance of Physics* in 1966, Jaki's books have been warmly welcomed by physicists, including the Swiss W. Heitler and the Oxfordian Peter Hodgson, but they are of great value also to students of the humanities, to literary critics, writers, theologians, and the general literate public if it wishes really to understand the modern intellectual situation, its prospects and problems. *The Purpose of It All* is a recapitulation, extension, and development of Jaki's thought, but especially of his profound and judicious essays on the clash between religion, ethics, and science in the Victorian and post-Victorian periods ("A Hundred Years of Two Cultures" and "Knowledge in an Age of Science," reprinted in *Chance or Reality and Other Essays*, 1986).

Part of Jaki's task is to take the reader on a *tour d'horizon* of the various world views that have been constructed over the last century. This might be read as a working out in detail of Chesterton's adage that the difficulty that ensues when people cease to believe in God is not that they believe in nothing, but that they believe in *anything*. This is not to suggest that Jaki believes that the belief in God is provable by the methods of science. For him, as for all the great figures in our central tradition of rational theism, science is simply incompetent to deal with nonphysical realities on which, nevertheless, its very existence and methods are dependent: truth, validity, noncontradiction, purpose, obligation. As most wise and thoughtful persons in the West since Socrates have realized, "objectivity" does not equal "objectness," and science is not the equivalent of reason but a subset of it.

In the noncommunist West, as Jaki shows, scientistic ideas encouraged the ruthless immoralism of individuals (social-Darwinist capitalism) and of groups (nationalist, imperialist, fascist, and Nazi ideologies of competitive strife) and of modern painting and literature, dominated as they are to an unprecedented degree by what one writer calls "the bondage of purposeless freedom." As Jaki knows, this was the outcome of 19th-century German, French, and English atheism, agnosticism, and aestheticism. Yet Jaki does not simply deplore these developments. Instead, he shows how they grew out of misunderstandings, falsifications, and misuses of the scientific method and of its results and possibilities. Darwin is a key figure here—as he was for Jacques Barzun and Gertrude Himmelfarb—along with his legion of voluble and reductionist followers, few of whom have had the insight and courage that permitted Thomas Henry Huxley in the last years of his life to change his opinions so dramatically regarding the alleged omnicompetence of Darwinian natural selection. From Darwin himself to Jacques Monod and Richard Dawkins, Darwinism has had, in Jaki's words, "man's sense of purpose as the chief and immediate target." Jaki's nuanced discussion of Darwin and his legacy avoids the errors of so many scientifically ignorant critics. "On the one hand," he told a *New York Times* interviewer in 1987, "I completely reject the use of the first chapter of Genesis as a scientific text about the origin of the universe, and to be taught as such in schools. At the same time, I also reject, and just as emphatically, the teaching of a counter-creationism in schools in which matter is eternal and the human mind is but a chance product of so-called evolutionary forces."

Jaki eloquently and combatively articulates the tradition of classical and Judeo-Christian learning, piety, and humanism that has provided the intellectual and moral center of Western civilization—with all its hypocrisies, sins, follies, and backslidings—since New Testament times. Science is one of the greatest achievements of this tradition, one of the most glorious and purposeful products and uses of the rational mind, but its very greatness can and has led to its idolization and lethal misuse. As a good Thomist, Jaki knows and communicates the insight that "second things suffer by being put first," that science is a good servant but a bad master. No lesson is more valuable in our confused and chaotic time, and no one teaches it more judiciously or in more illuminating and specific detail than Stanley Jaki.

M.D. Aeschliman teaches English at the University of Virginia.

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Miller's Tales

by Gregory McNamee

The Happiest Man Alive
by Mary V. Dearborn
New York: Simon & Schuster;
368 pp., $24.95

Henry Miller: A Life
by Robert Ferguson
New York: W.W. Norton;
397 pp., $24.95

◆

Throughout his long life, Henry Miller (1891-1980) wrote a handful of good books, among them *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare* (1945), in which the prodigal son and narrator returns from self-imposed exile in France to tour his native United States by automobile, and *Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch* (1956), a back-to-the-land meditation that prefigured some of the next decade's communitarian experiments. Both, along with one or two other of Miller's books, will endure in the literature of American social criticism as fine examples of the polemicist's art.

Miller, of course, is remembered for none of these books, but for a tide of pornographic and near-pornographic novels published both pseudonymously and under his own name: *Tropic of Cancer*, *Tropic of Capricorn*, *Sexus*, *Quiet Days in Clichy*, and nearly a hundred others. Of these books, Miller boasted, "The difference between me and other writers is that they struggle to get down what they've got up here in the head. I struggle to get what's below, in the solar plexus, in the nether regions." Smuggled into the United States in sub-rosa French editions, these "dirty books" titillated generations of American adolescents, who skipped over Miller's mawkish attempts at artistry to get at the naughty paragraphs deep within.

Read today, with the constant commodification of sexual relations in the intervening decades, the great bulk of Miller's books seem tame, awkward, self-conscious curios, the sort of stuff that collectors rush to gather but readers, in the main, pass over. In that light, it seems curious that two major American publishing houses should have found need to commission major biographies of Miller for publication in the centenary year of his birth. Yet here they are: two far different lives, both celebratory, both incomplete.

Mary Dearborn's *The Happiest Man Alive*—its title taken from a characteristic Miller boast, "I have no money, no resources, no hopes; I am the happiest man alive"—is, in the way of academic biographies these days, marked by pop-psych/post-modern self-satisfaction. The author seems content to write off Miller's philandering, violent temper, anti-Semitism, fascist leanings, and other dark aspects as manifestations of the *fin-de-siècle* America into which he was born, and nothing more. A historian, Dearborn does not often consider Miller as a writer; for her, he is more a laboratory specimen on a Lost Generation mounting board. Despite its varnish of sometimes interesting feminist and psychoanalytical theories, Dearborn's treatment remains stubbornly superficial.

Dearborn is especially pressed to explain Miller's most famous relationship, that with his second wife, June Smith, a dime-a-dancer who passed off Miller's writing as her own to secure the patronage of a wealthy admirer. With the proceeds, the two went to Paris, eventually entering into a triad with Anaïs Nin, whose diaries give a more interesting picture of Miller than do either of his subsequent biographers. (The 1989 film *Henry and June* recapitulates their three-way affair; for its tawdry realism, the film earned the industry's first NR rating, meaning something like "X with a plot.") For Dearborn, June is little more than a grifter whose sole mission is to derail Miller's career by systematically undoing him emotionally—a strange take, it would seem, for a feminist critic—rather than an equal player in a Bohemian funhouse.

June earns more sympathetic treatment in Robert Ferguson's *Henry Miller: A Life*; in his eyes she becomes at least something more than a destructive siren. Ferguson is at pains to rationalize and defend Miller and his familiars at every turn. Like so many exponents of every counterculture known to history, Miller, for instance, was gullible in the extreme when it came to faddish religions, embracing Vedanta, theosophy, scientology, and other occult doctrines indiscriminately; for Ferguson, "his spontaneous attraction to frauds" becomes not a mark of inconstant intellect but "an odd and even touching index of his credulity." Ferguson's breezy style makes his book a better bet for the casual reader than Dearborn's drier academic approach, but on the whole it is a long exercise in *People* magazine journalism.

There are any number of nasty diseases afoot to remind us of the consequences of the love-without-care platitudes Henry Miller committed to print and history. Anyone who still adheres to these ideas clearly has not been keeping up with the newspapers. Miller's real contribution, apart from his few enduring books, remains his willingness to champion free speech, his refusal to bow to censors of whatever stripe. He inspired others of his time in this cause—the critic Lionel Trilling, for example, who was moved to remark of Miller's novel *Black Spring* (1963), "This is a book which I will be glad to defend but not to praise." Miller's battle of two decades to publish his work freely in the United States, which both biographers adequately recount, has since allowed once-controversial writers like Erica Jong and Philip Roth their place on the shelves without the specter of being "banned in Boston."

But Henry Miller's time is long past, and these twin lives are too little, too late.

Gregory McNamee is a freelance writer living in Tucson.

Talking Brass

by William R. Hawkins

Hazardous Duty:
An American Soldier in the Twentieth Century
by Major General John K. Singlaub
New York: Summit Books;
526 pp., $24.95

◆

I remember having dinner with John Singlaub shortly after he retired from the Army. The Young Americans for Freedom chapter at the University of Tennessee, of which I was president, had invited him to speak on campus.

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Singlaub had gained considerable notoriety for having been fired as Chief of Staff of the U.N. Command and U.S. Forces in Korea in 1977, and pressured to resign from the service in 1978 for opposing administration policy in particular as it affected troop withdrawals from South Korea and arms control strategy. However, President Carter's attempts to muzzle the views of professional military men (other high-ranking officers were subsequently "Singlaubed") were an important contribution to the image of incompetence that led to his undoing. Since then, Singlaub has continued to work as tirelessly out of uniform for a strong America as he did during his 35 years in the Army.

In 1943 Singlaub went from ROTC at UCLA to paratrooper training, to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), operating behind enemy lines; he has been in and out of covert operations ever since. (The OSS became the CIA; when Singlaub jumped into occupied France in August 1944, his case officer was none other than William Casey.) He worked with British SOE, French SAS, and Marquis guerrilla units in Europe before going to China, where he organized guerrilla groups in Japanese-held Indochina.

For Singlaub there was no break between hot war and Cold War. He stayed in China, moving from the OSS to the CIA. "The more I studied the situation," he writes of those days, "the more obvious it became that the Allies' decision at Yalta to invite Soviet participation in the Pacific War through their invasion of Manchuria was a blunder of epic proportions . . . we could have dispatched American-trained Nationalist divisions to handle the occupation." It was the kind of shortsighted decision he was to encounter often in his career. Soviet intervention was to speed the end of the war and lessen immediate burdens on the United States, but it also led to the victory of Mao in China and to the costly wars in Korea and Vietnam.

When the Korean War began, Singlaub was executive officer of the Third Battalion, 505th Parachute Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division; the only black paratrooper outfit and one of the few full-strength units in the division. Indeed, it was double strength. Singlaub argued in vain for using his extra troops to fill out other units, but racial segregation was still the policy of the U.S. Army. It was several months before President Truman took what Singlaub calls "the politically bold but absolutely logical step of desegregating the armed services."

In Singlaub's opinion, social policy for the military should be based on strictly practical considerations. "[D]uring World War II, I'd encountered women military truck drivers, parachute riggers, train operators and instructor pilots. By the late 1970's the whole range of electronic warfare MOS's were open to women. But I personally drew the line at opening up combat support and combat assignments to women soldiers." He cites the military alert in 1976 in Korea when many women soldiers deserted their posts to look after their children, and the fact that the Soviet and Israeli armies each abandoned the use of women in combat after unhappy wartime experiments.

Singlaub ran several special operations behind Chinese lines during the Korean War before taking command of an infantry regiment on the central front. He drilled his troops in night assault tactics (usual at the time) and personally lead them into combat. He served in the regular staff and training assignments after Korea and afterward returned to special operations in Vietnam, where he sent teams into the Cambodian sanctuaries and against the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos. But while Singlaub's military exploits make excit-

BRIEF MENTIONS

DAVID HUMPHREYS' 'LIFE OF GENERAL WASHINGTON,' WITH GEORGE WASHINGTON'S 'REMARKS'
Edited by Rosemarie Zagarri
Athens: The University of Georgia Press; 129 pp., $24.95

Rosemarie Zagarri's superb reconstruction of David Humphreys' "lost" work—the only biography of Washington authorized by the general himself—puts to rest the notion that there is nothing new that can be said about George Washington. Zagarri, an associate professor of history at Catholic University, is the first historian to piece together both the fragments of the biography and George Washington's "Remarks"—the 11 handwritten pages of corrections and additions to Humphreys' manuscript.

David Humphreys was a military officer, one of the "Connecticut Wits," and a young man adept at picking patrons. In 1780, shortly after Humphreys sent Washington a highly flattering poem, the young colonel was appointed aide-de-camp to the Commander in Chief. He began the biography in 1786 and finished it before Washington's election to the presidency in 1789, leaving us with "a sense of a career that had been finished, rather than one that was about to enter a whole new phase."

From Humphreys' account as well as from the revealing comments of the general himself, we see firsthand such things as the extent of Washington's long and agonizing indecision over whether to accept the presidency (Humphreys claims he was the first person with whom Washington ever broached the subject); the grief and sense of personal responsibility Washington felt for a November 1758 incident during the French and Indian War in which British troops mistakenly fired upon each other (an incident mentioned nowhere else in Washington's papers); and the extent to which Washington shrank from even the slightest appearance of self-aggrandizement or self-promotion. Washington's integrity was indeed, as scores of panegyrics have long contended, as apparent in his private life as in his public deeds.

There is, however, evidence here to suggest that Washington was not entirely immune to tinges of vanity. For example, when Humphreys describes one of Washington's military campaigns, Washington adds the fact that the weather was "inclement." When Humphreys discusses the general's Revolutionary War accomplishments, Washington adds that "my time & Service were given to the public without compensation, and that every direct and indirect attempt afterwards, to reward them [was refused]." Whether because of vanity, pride, or for the simple sake of the historical record, Washington obviously felt the need to mention his sacrifice.

Nevertheless, historians would be hard pressed to find a humbler, more noble, less presumptuous war hero and national leader than George Washington. Realizing that he had been unusually candid and forthright in his "Remarks," Washington instructed Humphreys to either return these written comments or commit them "to the flames." Historians should be indebted to Humphreys for his insubordination.

—*Theodore Pappas*

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ing reading, it is clear that more recent events prompted the writing of this book: he both opens and closes his story with chapters on the Iran-Contra affair.

Singlaub had no direct involvement with the scandal itself, but his efforts to raise private funding for the anticommunist forces in Nicaragua and to supply them with weapons and training involved him in the investigation. He devotes almost a quarter of the book to the topic and makes penetrating observations on Oliver North, Richard Secord, William Casey, and Elliott Abrams, as well as on attempts by the CIA and the State Department to implement the Reagan Doctrine. Only Casey emerges unscathed from his treatment, and Singlaub plainly resents those who have tried to use the man's death either to cover their own mistakes or to make allegations based on "evidence" Casey supposedly took to his grave.

Singlaub portrays Secord and his partner Albert Hakim as unprincipled mercenaries who used the Contras' cause to line their own pockets. He believes that $5 million at most was diverted from the Iranian arms sales for use by the Contras, but that the freedom fighters never saw the money, which ended up in Swiss accounts controlled by Secord; millions of dollars contributed to the Contras by private donors and by anticommunist governments in Asia and Latin America were also siphoned off. Singlaub and Secord ran competing supply operations for the Contras, but eventually Secord used his influence with North to cut Singlaub's network out of the action. Unfortunately, Secord's operation delivered too little too late, and in ways that struck a veteran guerrilla fighter like Singlaub as incompetent.

Singlaub regards Oliver North as "an intense, bright young officer willing to make hard decisions and work long hours to implement them." But he was "only a Marine lieutenant colonel on loan to the NSC," without the background or experience to run a covert global network. It was this naiveté that made him an easy victim of Secord and Hakim, who tried to compromise him with illicit gifts from the large profits they were skimming from North's operations.

Singlaub says of William Casey that he was "a strict legalist" who would never have approved such actions. Casey also did not trust Secord. Unfortunately, he was not able to control every CIA movement or undo all the damage inflicted on the agency by Stansfield Turner, its director under President Carter. Singlaub blames the gutting of the covert operations section by Turner for the lack of expertise and outright bungling demonstrated by the CIA in both Central America and Iran. Singlaub knew from his own contacts with former Iranian military officers that the so-called "moderates" with which the Reagan administration was dealing were nothing of the kind. And he saw firsthand on his visits to the Contra camps the poor training offered by CIA advisers.

Singlaub also voices concern for the future. He does not trust Gorbachev and fears the United States is letting its guard down too soon, because "the Soviets have only modernized, not actually reduced, their armed forces." He regrets that the Bush administration has put Central America on the back burner, noting that the Sandinistas, despite their defeat at the polls, still hold effective power in Nicaragua and continue to foment revolution in El Salvador; while communism in Asia, where Singlaub has had the most experience, is not weakened at all. And there are new dangers as well looming in the world. He notes the deployment of troops to Saudi Arabia, but finished the book before the outbreak of war in the Persian Gulf.

Although Singlaub wonders whether after forty years of containment the United States will have the stamina and the nerve to continue to assert itself as a superpower, it is clear that he himself remains determined as ever to perform his military duty in its service.

William R. Hawkins is president of the Hamilton Center for National Strategy in Knoxville, Tennessee.

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Letter From San Diego

by Barbara McCarthy

Welfare and Illegal Immigration

◆

Two San Diego police officers, responding in the early morning darkness to a call that a school was being burglarized, arrived just as two suspects were fleeing into a nearby canyon. As the San Diego *Union* reported, the officers did not plunge into the canyon in pursuit—the terrain was dangerous, night visibility almost zero, and the officers didn't know if the suspects were armed—but instead called out the standard warning, in English, that if the suspects didn't return voluntarily, they would send in their trained German shepherd. No response, so they loosed the dog.

The dog soon found a man, clamped his teeth firmly on his leg, and didn't let go until the officers pulled him off, which is precisely what such dogs are supposed to do. However, the man the dog found was not a burglar, but an illegal alien from Mexico, part of a small group of illegals sleeping in the canyon. The native of Oaxaca didn't hear the warning call, and wouldn't have understood what was said anyway, because he spoke no English—nor Spanish, in fact, only the dialect of the Mixtec Indians.

The police promptly radioed for an ambulance to take the man to the nearest emergency room, where many stitches were taken in his leg. He spent some twenty hours at the hospital, was given a pair of crutches, some bus tokens, and told to return for follow-up treatment.

Questions arise: who will pay for the ambulance run, or the hospital treatment? Sometimes hospitals put in claims to one or another government agency when there is neither money nor insurance to cover costs. If the claims are denied, hospitals and private ambulances have little choice but to recoup their losses by raising the rates of paying patients. In this case, a personal injury attorney surfaced in less than two days, planning to sue the city of San Diego on behalf of the injured man. If he wins, taxpayers will pick up the tab.

California has the largest number of illegal aliens of any state in the country, though there is no accurate figure on just how many there are. It is almost impossible to get accurate figures on the costs that taxpayers pick up, but there are clues.

If someone is injured in an auto accident and his life is in danger, if he has been stabbed or shot during a fight, or if a child is seriously hurt in some manner, all are normally treated even if the hospital finds that there is no way the victim can pay for the services. How can one refuse to treat a human being in critical need of care? In one way or another, the costs are picked up by someone else, by taxpayers or other patients. If illegal aliens crossing the border are hurt or raped by a border bandit, they are taken to a hospital on this side of the border, and someone else picks up the tab.

Many Mexican women come across the border illegally to have their babies. Hospitals do not turn away someone in labor just because she has no money or insurance, so the woman will pay nothing for services received. Some mothers return south of the border promptly, content that the child will be able to claim U.S. citizenship when the need arises. Others, including entire families, stay here because of the welfare benefits. Because the baby is automatically an American citizen, he or she is entitled to all the giveaway programs that needy citizens receive: Aid to Families of Dependent Children (AFDC), food stamps, Medicaid.

A few years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that children of illegal aliens are entitled to the same education as an American citizen, and along much of the entire Southern border, the numbers of new students are so high that many school districts should be adding as much as a classroom every day, were they to try to keep up with attendance. They can't afford to do this. Moreover, there is an unknown number of children who, using false addresses in the United States, cross the border everyday to attend California schools. There can be twenty-five or more youngsters all claiming the same address for school records. When asked why school districts don't check up on this and deny Mexican nationals use of the schools, the usual response is, "We don't have the resources to do the checking." Many think they don't *want* to sort them out, because each school district receives an average daily attendance fee from the state for every child, and it keeps more teachers employed.

A certain percentage of illegal aliens enter this country for the express purpose of engaging in criminal activity. The massive drug activity is widely known, but there is much more. There is rampant auto theft, burglaries of homes and businesses, and the full gamut of crimes against the person.

A judge in Orange County has found that at least 36 percent of his docket is filled with cases involving illegal aliens who have been arrested for felonies. A recent study in San Diego County found that 41 percent of those arrested for felony crimes are illegals. At any given time in San Diego County jails, about 15 percent of prisoners have immigration holds on them. There are 17 known gangs from Baja, California, who cross the border to commit their crimes, up to and including homicide. Federal and state prisons, as well as county jails, have a high percentage of illegals in their census; some surveys show that one

LIBERAL ARTS

LAWSUITS AND LOVERS

A 29-year-old woman indentifying herself only as Jane Doe told the *Chicago Tribune* last October that she felt an "injustice" had been done to her when she contracted herpes from her boyfriend who had slept with another woman. Doe has filed a lawsuit seeking at least $700,000 in damages, charging that the woman had an obligation to either tell her partners of her medical condition or abstain from sex altogether.

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out of five prisoners in American jails is an illegal alien. This costs the public money in arrests, trials, public defenders, and incarceration, let alone in the opportunity costs entailed.

Those who try to get hard figures on uses of public money for illegal aliens are usually stonewalled. "We don't keep our records that way." In many cases, agencies that provide money and services have been forbidden to keep records of the alienage status of those they service, or even to ask their status, in some cases as a result of court decisions. However, some figures are known. The net loss to L.A. County for subsidized medical care for illegals and for use of the criminal justice system to apprehend illegals is estimated at $276.1 million. AFDC costs to taxpayers in L.A. County are already $249 million, a sum expected to reach $1 billion by the turn of the century. Overall, Los Angeles and L.A. County in fiscal year 1990-1991 spent $1.6 billion for services rendered to illegal aliens.

The most accurate figures seem to be from L.A. County, because their Board of Supervisors — unlike those in San Diego and other counties, where they shy from talking about costs to the public — is actually interested in finding the costs. Many local city and county governments care little about alienage, except to try to be reimbursed by the federal government for any known expenses. They tend to look at federal money as "free" money — it doesn't come from *their* budgets. When a California state senator tried to get figures on a statewide level, the protests from immigrants' rights groups were deafening, and he was denounced as "racist." At last report, he was still trying to find hard figures.

California has illegal aliens from all over the world, though its geography means most are from south of the border. They all cost the taxpayer, not only in giveaway programs but in the taking of jobs that could and would have been filled by American citizens. Those who do menial labor, including working in the fields, take jobs from native migrant workers. Those with more skills are often in construction work, happily accepting a lesser wage than citizens normally get. However, law enforcement professionals find that in the last ten years, this profile of the diligent illegal alien has changed. Most illegals used to be desperate, hardworking, uneducated, and docile and would go home after a growing season. Such people still enter, but their percentage is decreasing, as more enter to panhandle, rob, steal, and deal drugs.

How do you levy the cost to landowners who find a few or a great number of illegals living on their property? How do you levy the cost to businesses that have large clusters of illegals hanging around their entrances, waiting for day work, frightening passersby, and scaring away regular customers? Local police are of little help to them because of the assorted court and bureaucratic decisions spurred by immigration advocates who have deemed illegal aliens a federal, and not a local, problem. There is a grossly insufficient number of federal agents to handle the sheer volume of illegals who should be deported. These illegals are living in holes in the ground lined with plastic sheets, or in hovels built from scrap lumber, with no cooking or plumbing facilities, as they wait for work. Result: the areas inundated with illegals become instant sewers, and more than one large fire has started from their open-air cooking.

Perhaps some day it will be politically fashionable to do the paperwork needed to assess the cost of allowing illegal aliens in our country — the cost of illegals using government programs to which they are not entitled, the cost of losing jobs to illegal noncitizens, the cost of sending the illegals home. Perhaps some day politicians will realize that our borders are out of control and do something constructive about it, such as hiring adequate numbers of Border Patrol and INS agents to cut the problem off at the source. Perhaps some day citizens from all over the country will realize how great a proportion of their taxes go for these purposes and that, although California has the greatest problem with this issue, similar conditions and expenses are occurring all over the nation. At that point, the people will give Congress a mandate: fix the problem, and fix it now.

Barbara McCarthy is editor of Eleven Ninety-Nine, *the publication of the Stamp Out Crime Council of San Diego, California.*

Letter From the Lower Right

by John Shelton Reed

Class Dismissed

◆

Last month, I wrote that Southern manners have taken the edge off class conflict in the South. Let's explore that proposition a bit more.

Fifty years ago, a North Carolina journalist named W.J. Cash published what quickly became a classic treatment of Southern history and culture, *The Mind of the South*. In that book, Cash did not deny that there are class distinctions in the South. Indeed, he emphasized them, as an aspiring 1930's intellectual should. But he insisted that there had been an "almost complete disappearance of economic and social focus on the part of the masses."

That's typically Cashian overstatement, but can we agree that there hasn't been anywhere near as much class consciousness in the South as you might expect?

Cash argued that the "essential kernel" of "the famous Southern manner" was simply the "kindliness and easiness" of Southern backcountry life, and he observed that the Southern etiquette of class has softened the distinction between rich and poor, just as the old etiquette of race continually emphasized the gulf of caste. The manners governing relations between the classes, he wrote, have served as "a balance wheel in the Southern social world and . . . a barrier against the development of bitterness" — or, you could as easily say, against the development of class consciousness.

In the Old South, Cash maintained, the yeoman seldom encountered "naked hauteur." The gentleman "patronize[d] him in such fashion that . . . he seemed not to be patronized at all but actually deferred to." The Civil War, in Cash's view, meant only that "the captains knew [even] better how to handle the commoner, to steer expertly about his recalcitrance, to manipulate him without ever arousing his jealous independence." And the rise of industry meant merely that "the old personal easy relations" of the countryside were brought indoors:

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> The [textile] baron knew these workmen familiarly as Bill and Sam and George and Dick, or as Lil and Sal and Jane and Lucy. More, he knew their pedigrees and their histories. More still, with that innocent love of personal detail native to Southerners, he kept himself posted as to their lives as they were lived under his wing; knew their little adventures and scandals and hopes and loves and griefs and joys.

This particular description goes on, and on, and it's easy to make fun of it, but surely we can allow Cash some license in describing the human face of paternalism, since he was unsparing in his treatment of its defects. In any case, this is not just a flight of romanticism, grotesquely applied to the textile mill. Cash was onto something important.

I won't soon forget what a Mississippi buddy said one time, when he stopped off to see us on his way home from a sociological convention in the Northeast. Over bourbon he said that he'd noticed something interesting about how some sociologists dealt with the staff of the convention hotel. "Damn Marxists," he said, "go on and on about the *workers* — and they treat the help like dirt."

Partly, of course, this is just the ordinary arrogance of Yankee intellectuals who, deep down, really don't buy into all that dignity of labor stuff. One day at lunch I was talking educational policy with one of the breed, who clinched his argument by saying, "If kids don't get a good education, they'll wind up like *him*" — nodding scornfully in the direction of a cafeteria worker.

I didn't know what to say. We both saw this man almost every day. He did his undemanding job cheerfully and well, and he was making an honest living, which is more than can be said for some tenured professors. It had never occurred to me that he was a bad example, but obviously my colleague despised the man for his insignificance.

But even if he hadn't, his manners might have suggested that he did. From a Southern point of view, many Yankees, Marxist or otherwise, treat *everyone* like dirt. And if you're working for one, those manners rub your face in the fact of your subordination.

Not long ago, my hometown was buzzing with the story of the Yankee newcomer who took a work crew to task for some fault with their work. The workers simply packed up their tools and left him sputtering in mid-criticism. "Sonofabitch wants to boss you around like he owns you" was thought to be sufficient explanation.

That's a significant phrase, isn't it? "Like he *owns* you." As legatees of a slave society — whether our ancestors were on the top, bottom, or side — Southerners may have a special understanding of the importance of independence, dignity, and pride. It makes sense that the fictive equality among white men should have been embodied in manners that didn't bring into question the other's worth or self-respect.

Those manners seem to be outlasting the conditions that gave rise to them — indeed, they're usually extended now to Southern blacks, most of whom seem willing to return the favor — but they are threatened, and not just by northern newcomers. In fact, they were already threatened in 1940, as Cash recognized. He was deadly on the imported "Yankee cult of the Great Executive," which appealed to "the vanity especially of the young men who had been educated in the Northern business schools." Well, we have our own business schools now.

But there are still Southern enterprises run on the old principles, and those principles still shape the expectations of many Southern workers. A while back I took a class on a field trip to one of the few remaining family-owned textile mills in North Carolina. The trip had been arranged far in advance, but we arrived to find the place virtually shut down. The entire managerial staff and all but a skeleton crew of workers had gone to the funeral of a retired weave-room worker. Don't look for that mill to be unionized any time soon.

A stone's throw away, in Winston-Salem, we recently witnessed an instructive cultural conflict, when Reynolds Tobacco merged with Nabisco and acquired a new management team. *Barbarians at the Gate*, the best-seller about the RJR Nabisco leveraged buy-out, tells the story of Ross Johnson, the new Canadian CEO. Compared to the junk-bond sharks who eventually stripped him of his company and his job, Johnson comes off as a rather amiable buccaneer, just a guy out of the Nabisco sales division who liked to fly around the country in private jets and hang out with professional athletes, but his Great Executive style was a striking change for RJR.

Mr. R.J. Reynolds and his heirs hadn't exactly led lives of asceticism and self-denial, but they had been managers of the old-fashioned Southern variety. It was understood, for instance, that Reynolds executives drove nothing bigger than a Buick. When David Rockefeller came to Winston-Salem for a speech and asked for a limousine, there was none to be found in the entire city. In the 1950's, one worker recalled, "I remember some mornings pulling up beside Mr. Whitaker [the president] in his little brown Studebaker. He'd give me a wave and I'd give him a wave back. We were going in to work together. We were all after the same thing."

Well, Ross Johnson came to work by helicopter. Do you wonder why Winston-Salem never took to him?

Folks were especially cruel to Johnson's trophy wife Laurie, a California girl widely known as "Cupcake." (After she and her husband were given honorary degrees by a needy Florida college, she was known as "Dr. Cupcake.") When Johnson got even by moving his corporate headquarters to Atlanta, observing as he left that Winston-Salem was too "bucolic," bumpers blossomed with stickers saying "Proud to be Bucolic."

Sure, there is deference in the South to men of high standing, but it can't be taken for granted, and it depends on a measure of self-deprecation. Cash got that exactly right. Southerners usually treat each other as equals, whatever our private opinions.

That is, unless we *want* to insult someone. Like Ross Johnson. But that's another story.

John Shelton Reed writes from Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Parts of this letter are adapted from a lecture on "The Mind of the South and Southern Distinctiveness" at the Chancellor's Symposium on Southern History at the University of Mississippi last October.

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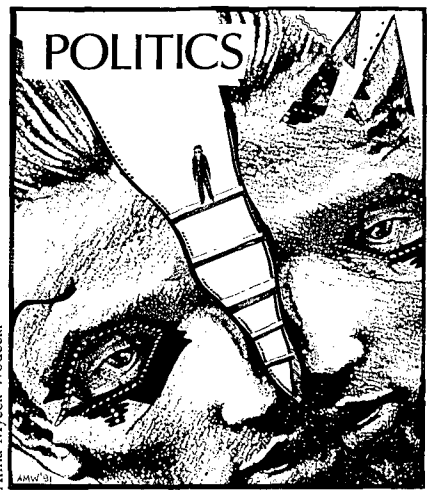

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Playing Market

by Jeffrey A. Tucker

'HOPE' and Housing and Urban Development

Jack Kemp arrived in February 1989 at the dark halls of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). During the Energy Crisis, the lights had been dimmed to save electricity, but as secretary, Kemp ordered them turned up. With that action, he began a two-year spending spree which has transformed its colossal concrete headquarters in L'Enfant Plaza, Washington, D.C., from a hated leftist agency to a beloved center for neoconservative social activism.

It's hard to remember, but HUD was on the ropes three years ago. Every day brought new media revelations about widespread corruption under the disgraced regime of secretary Samuel R. Pierce. The *Washington Post* had its crack reporters sniffing out every detail. The agency seemed irreformable, and calls for its abolition were growing. At the very least, devastating budget cuts were imminent.

But who remembers the "Robin HUD" incident today? (That was the media name for the employee who stole $6 million, supposedly to give it to the poor.) Even though a recent internal audit by Price Waterhouse, which Kemp won't release to the public, showed that corruption is just as rampant, Kemp has changed the agency's public image. Thanks to his efforts, its budget has been growing 15 percent per year, completely reversing the minor cuts of the Reagan years. But that's not enough; Kemp now wants a 32 percent increase for next year. Early in his tenure, Kemp was asked by this writer why U.S. taxpayers should entrust their money to the agency after its long history of waste, fraud, and abuse. "Because I'm in charge now," he said.

In September 1989, in a piece of forgotten history, two Kemp aides, Ken Blackwell and C. Austin Fitts, sent Kemp a memo urging him to hold a massive fire sale of housing under government control, with thousands foreclosed-upon properties included. Prices would be set at their market level and made available for sale to whoever would buy. Prices would fall every day by one percent until each one was sold. The government would be done with it.

Nice idea. At least it might have compensated for the tax dollars used to save the eyesight of HUD bureaucrats. But Kemp didn't take up the idea, and it went nowhere. An even better idea would have been to sell all public housing to the highest bidder, and let the new owner charge market rent. It would have encouraged some degree of responsibility.

But today, Kemp's eyes are focused on another program: Housing Opportunity for People Everywhere (HOPE), enshrined in the 346-page housing bill signed by Bush in November 1990. HOPE is the name for a big pile of money (about $2.1 billion, if Kemp gets his way) earmarked to facilitate the conversion of HUD-funded housing blocs into resident-managed (or partially owned) properties.

Kemp's promise not to squander money might have been plausible before April 1991. That's when the agency's bête noire, the *National Journal*, revealed the truth behind a beloved showcase for tenant management and housing ownership, Washington's Kenilworth-Parkside housing project and its administrator Kimi Grey, the welfare queen whom the Bush administration has tried to make into a national hero. Once a haven for drug dealers, violent criminals, and hopeless cases, it was supposed to have been converted into a vibrant community of apartment owners who have been "bootstrapped" onto the fast track of mainstream life. So the story goes, though it still looks like a housing project, albeit with trimmed hedges and lower than expected crime rates.

It turns out, according to the *Journal*, that Kenilworth-Parkside is the most expensive public housing project in American history. Add up all the costs of renovations, subsidies, relocation funds, etc., and federal and local governments will spend $130,000 per apartment at Kenilworth-Parkside to complete Kemp's plans. That's the price of an upscale townhouse in suburban Alexandria, Virginia. Renovation at the project took the pace of, well, a government project: the first grant was awarded in 1982, and the renovation and "sales" are far from finished.

The *National Journal* article should have done an enormous amount of damage, and made Kemp and his program the subject of wide ridicule. People joked about the revelation at private Washington parties. But the news that Kemp's program cost $130,000 per apartment didn't travel outside the Beltway.

HUD does its best to cover up such

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information. A glossy book targeted at the public and distributed by the agency ("Home Ownership and Affordable Housing: The Opportunities") features pictures of Kimi Grey receiving the key to 132 renovated units. But the book makes no mention of the rise in costs. The agency's book lists no aggregate figures for any of the 17 "successful" cases of conversion to tenant ownership, giving it the ring of an elaborate disinformation campaign. But it does quote Kemp saying he wants to "replicate the spirit and success of this home ownership program throughout the Nation."

Why does it cost so much to sell public housing? After all, the decision to sell usually implies an expectation of profit. But not at HUD. "These sales," says the agency, "will be complex transactions, requiring planning for rehabilitation, counseling of tenants, organization development, and planning for economic development activities." Those are code words for a bureaucratic bonanza. Yet Kemp wants to replicate the Kenilworth experience with the nation's 13,000 public housing projects, with critics estimating the cost at $75 billion.

Once the transaction is complete, we find that none of these poor people will actually "own" anything, if ownership implies control. The government sets the price at which they are sold, one which people below the poverty line can afford. The "owners" continue to receive regular subsidies for five years, and there is plenty of money available after that during economic downturns.

A survey by Stegman and Rohe asked public housing residents the reasons for wanting ownership, and 67 percent of them said it was a good financial investment. But under the Kemp standards of "ownership," it is not. The owners cannot put their places on the open market, but can only sell it back to the government, or to a government proxy, which then allows only poor people to "buy" it. And for the first twenty years, the person is not allowed to make money from sales because "undue profits" are disallowed by law. This is not a market: it is what Ludwig von Mises called "playing market." As Cassandra Chrones Moore pointed out in *National Review*, HUD rules for housing ownership parallel the Soviet system for land ownership, except the Soviet system is slightly freer.

The agency publishes a monograph of questions and answers about HOPE. The first question: How does HOPE fit into a national housing strategy for low-income people? Answer: "The Department's housing strategy includes maintaining the existing subsidized housing stock—through programs such as public housing operating subsidies and modernization, preservation, and renewal of Section 8 contracts—while expanding the number of households served through housing vouchers and certificates." That's some vision.

If you were under the impression that Kemp is trying to move away from public housing, the monograph is quick to correct this. "In fact, we're doing the opposite . . . because all units sold will be replaced on a one-for-one basis, we are actually doubling the stock available." For every unit sold, another public housing unit goes up. Though this is like using bug spray that breeds a roach for every one it kills, in 1992, HOPE will spend $270 million on "Public Housing Replacement."

In the Orwellian language of Kemp's agency, providing "opportunity" actually means giving more cash grants for much more than the fundamentals. Thus the poor get not only a house, but social therapy as well. For example, the "Elderly Independence" project of HOPE is openly welfarish. It promises to provide more "comprehensive" care than when the liberals were in charge. The "frail elderly" get funds for "personal care, case management, transportation, meals, counseling, supervision, and other services essential for achieving and maintaining independent living." This is encouraging independence, Washington-style.

Another part of HOPE is the "Shelter Plus Care" program dedicated to "ending the tragedy of homelessness." In its literature, the agency provides a chronology of the great deeds this division has done between May 1989 to January 1991. Adding up all the expenditures for these deeds, the bill comes to over $1 billion. Kemp has asked for another 22 percent increase in the program for 1992.

Amidst all this fretting about the homeless, the Census Bureau reports that in the rest of America, the average age of first-time home buyers is 31 today, compared to 28 in 1976.

It is virtually impossible for young couples to raise money for a home without outside help, usually provided by their parents. The country is getting poorer, thanks to agencies like HUD, but few seem interested in this problem.

In budget battles, Kemp spends his time and energy lashing out at anyone who dares question his demand for nearly $900 million in grants for his HOPE program, even though that's a 450 percent increase over the 1991 budget. The Senate wanted to appropriate "only" $440.4 million and the House only $361 million. But that's unacceptable, according to Kemp, because it puts "HUD's FY 1992 budget on a collision course with very important housing needs in the future," Kemp told congressional conferees. He also blasted Congress for suggesting staffing cuts in the Office of Policy Development; cuts would "make it extremely difficult for this Office to function effectively," he wrote.

That's what we get from a man who describes himself (most recently to the *Washington Post*) as a "bleeding-heart progressive liberal democrat—small l, small d—Abraham Lincoln private-property-based conservative." He speaks often for conservative groups around Washington, D.C., delivering roughly the same message at each gathering. He attacks old-line conservatives in terms as strange as those he uses on liberals. Vintage Kemp: "How can the poor pull themselves up by their bootstraps if they don't have any boots?!"

Between speeches, he tours housing projects in big cities to demonstrate his concern for the poor, the cameras always on hand to capture the moment. Conservatives may be amused at his bravado, but then sit back comfortably on the belief that if Kemp is not openly dismantling federal housing programs, he is doing so covertly, or at the very least improving the situation.

But there is no mystery about what Kemp is up to. He is erecting a conservative welfare state of a peculiar variety, and piling it on top of an already existing liberal one. To the taxpayer, the ideological label makes no difference. Kemp does get needled from the

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right from time to time. The *National Review* has attacked the home ownership program in strong terms, but ultimately places the blame for flaws on Congress, a tactic that worked to keep Reagan's reputation alive among conservatives for his two terms. The National Right to Work Committee has blasted Kemp for favoring unions in the distribution of housing contracts. I have criticized in these pages Kemp's enterprise zone program as a covert subsidy program for business. And a conservative activist group, the Stamp Out Crime Council, has blasted Kemp's decision to provide community development block grants to illegal immigrants. (Kemp's defense: "discrimination against illegal aliens . . . would frustrate the basic purposes" of HUD; besides, "whether alleviating hunger and homelessness, combating child abuse, minimizing substance abuse, or providing crises intervention, the community as a whole benefits.") But somehow these criticisms from the right don't stick. The faith that a bureaucracy like HUD can promote conservative ends stays alive.

But the bottom line on bureaucracies is that they don't work well. From an economic standpoint, it doesn't matter whether conservatives or liberals are running them. The administrators toy with money that is not their own; employees are under no constraints to serve the consuming public; and managers operate without the benefit of a profit and loss system to guide decision making. These used to be critiques the right offered as a matter of course. But sometime between 1980 and 1990 this wisdom was tossed out, and now we suffer under right-wing welfarism not substantially different from the left-wing variety.

In fact, if HUD were leveled today, it would be Washington's right wing, not left, that would scream bloody murder. It serves as useful employment for conservatives who came to Washington to participate in a revolution, but who now occupy the offices of government agencies, and use those positions of established power while claiming to promote their social goals. Almost everyone identified with the "conservative movement" in Washington has a "good contact" at HUD.

Kemp continues to harbor hopes of getting the presidential nomination in 1996. Is it possible that his record of providing cash giveaways — unpopular with the public but immensely popular with those getting the loot — can be the basis of a Republican campaign? If so, that tells us much about the new political equilibrium that has settled upon America — and the desperate need to reassert the old conservative view, long forgotten, that the free society requires limitations on government power.

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Free Pass to Disneyland

by Don Barnett

Soviet Émigrés on the Dole

The economy Soviet émigrés leave behind is properly called irrational. Consider the economy they enter in the United States as described in an article that recently appeared in the Soviet paper the *Independent*. "The benefits (in America) are real. Our son attended an excellent private school for which he didn't pay a cent. Then he went to college for free. . . . The apartment we live in rents for half of what it should normally go for. They say you have to wait on a list for three years for government apartments like these, but there are ways to move ahead on the list. Smarter émigrés will rent their apartments out to dumber newcomers and pocket the difference. . . . My mother-in-law lives in her own (subsidized) apartment and receives a full (U.S.) pension, which surprises even me . . . this is a poor man's paradise."

On any day the main Russian émigré newspaper, *Novoye Russkoye Slovo*, is crammed with advertisements for lawyers and "consultants" hawking advice on how to work the ropes of social services. On some days these ads and appeals from lawyers looking for personal injury suits outnumber the job offerings.

Advertisements such as these are aimed at new immigrants in America and would-be immigrants in the Soviet Union still considering a move to the "poor man's paradise." I have watched the growth of this cottage consulting industry in the immigrant community for over ten years and realize it is part of a wider trend in America. However, it also relates directly to the way in which the country handles Soviets desiring to emigrate to the United States.

The Political Refugee Act of 1980 codified in U.S. law various United Nations resolutions that call for refugees — those who have been persecuted or have a "well founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion" — to receive special recognition and consideration. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) now places fifteen to sixteen million people in that category worldwide. The United States admits a certain number of refugees each year over and above regular immigration quotas. The number of refugees is not subject to any ceiling imposed by immigration law. By definition, the program is intended to provide refuge to those in imminent danger at home who have nowhere else to go.

Initially the Refugee Act was used to get some of our Vietnam War allies out of harm's way as quickly as possible. Ten years later we still accept some fifty-two thousand Southeast Asians a year as refugees. However, it is the Soviet Union that supplies the largest number of refugees from a single country. This year up to some sixty thousand Soviets will be admitted to the United States as refugees. Refugees from various countries now comprise about 18 percent of our total yearly immigration. In spite of the growth in overall numbers of refugee admissions over the last five years, the total number accepted from Burma, El Salvador, China, Guatemala, and Chile has never exceeded a few dozen per year.

There are some important advantages refugees enjoy over regular immigrants, like a cash allotment and transportation to the United States. Currently money for transportation is handled as an interest-free loan, but it is too early to tell how collectible these loans are. Until this year transportation costs were covered by the United States. Refugees, who are entitled to all welfare programs, are actively encour-

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aged to use Medicaid and other programs like food stamps and Section 8 housing; those of retirement age receive Social Security and Medicare. Sponsoring organizations dispense additional government-funded benefits. The New York Association for New Americans, the largest such organization for Soviet Jews, is like an extension of Health and Human Services run by immigrants. It is described in the immigrant community as a "Soviet-style Mafia."

Refugees are given an inside track to citizenship and do not have to demonstrate employment or self-sufficiency, which is the case for most other immigrant categories. In theory, immigrant visas are approved only for those unlikely to become a public charge, and an immigrant can be deported if he becomes a "public burden" within five years of arrival. In practice, the courts have diluted the definition of a "public burden." But when comparing admission as a refugee versus admission as a regular immigrant, nonrefugee immigration overwhelmingly favors individuals with jobs.

The number of Soviets applying for the refugee program is so great that the United States recently narrowed its definition of a refugee to include only those with relatives already here. Thus, Soviet refugees of today will almost always have relatives in the United States — perhaps in-laws or uncles, themselves recent beneficiaries of the resettlement program. A typical nonrefugee immigrant must have an immediate family member who is a U.S. citizen. We do not know how many refugees could be admitted to the United States as regular immigrants — either under recently expanded skilled worker categories or because of family ties. It is clear, however, that the regular immigration quota is undersubscribed. This year only three thousand will be admitted as immigrants from the Soviet Union. Refugee status is the designation of choice for those immigrating to America and for those in America who would otherwise have to help with some of the costs.

The Morrison-Lautenberg bill of 1990 establishes a presumption that Jews and Christian evangelicals in the Soviet Union are, as a group, subject to persecution. Accordingly, "Once an individual asserts that he is a member of the covered class and asserts that he has been persecuted or has a fear of persecution that individual shall be deemed a refugee, subject only to whatever countervailing evidence the INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service] may have or produce to establish that the individual was not persecuted or could not reasonably have a well founded fear of persecution." Essentially, the refugee quota for the Soviet Union is filled by members of the covered group (with relatives in America) on a first-come, first-served basis. According to the State Department and the INS, eighty to ninety percent of the slots go to Jewish applicants, while most of the balance is awarded to evangelicals. Those who do not meet the Morrison-Lautenberg criteria need not apply.

For an individual seeking to move to America, the process begins with a refugee application obtained from the U.S. embassy or the black market where photocopies are sold. Applications are mailed to Washington for evaluation against the criteria defining a refugee. The processing center in Washington contacts supposed relatives in America to verify the family link claimed on the application. Most refugee applications are weeded out up front for lack of family ties in the United States. After a three to five year wait the applicant is given a ten-minute interview with an INS staffer in the Soviet Union.

If the would-be immigrant is Jewish, and doesn't want to risk the wait, he may go to Israel. Israel is currently absorbing about one hundred seventy thousand Soviet Jews a year. In Moscow one often hears the complaint among Jews that the Americans and Israelis struck a deal to shunt Jewish immigration away from the United States to Israel. America is the country of choice for the vast majority of Soviet émigrés, including those leaving for Israel. The ten billion dollars in U.S. loan guarantees to underwrite the settlement of Soviet Jews in Israel may be only part of the aid required to keep the migration to that country from becoming a genuine refugee crisis. It seems America will pay for Soviet emigration, whatever direction it takes.

The State Department has estimated the cost for refugee processing in America to be about seventy million dollars for each ten thousand refugees. However, this amount does not include estimates for expenditures on social services required after the refugee has arrived here. Much of this cost is submerged in state expenditures for Medicaid and other welfare programs. According to an unofficial poll conducted by *Novoye Russkoye Slovo*, among working-age Soviet émigrés one-third are unemployed a year after arrival. Including pensioners in the overall number of new arrivals would mean that 40 percent of Soviet adult immigrants are dependent on various welfare programs a year after arrival. Compared to the actual cost of maintaining a refugee, the seven thousand dollar processing-and-transportation fee is mere bus fare.

Besides spawning bureaucracies to dispense it, public assistance has tilted the demographics of the refugee population away from the characteristics that could make the migration a self-financing process. According to the Health and Human Services Office for Refugee Resettlement, about 20 percent of Soviet refugees are over age 55. By contrast, only 7 percent of nonrefugee immigrants are older than 55. This difference is even more significant than the numbers would seem to suggest. Most elderly immigrants are joining children who are established and who will be able to support them. Older refugees arrive in need of assistance from day one.

During an eight-month tour of the Soviet Union in 1988 I made the acquaintance of several individuals who were planning to emigrate to America. Some talked about the free medical care they would be receiving for problems that could never be addressed at home. One man near retirement age (60 for men, 55 for women in the Soviet Union) said he had heard he would not have to work since he would be receiving a "full U.S. pension" in America. With a few other facts he had determined that within a year he would be able to buy a car, something he could not do in a lifetime of work at home. He was correct, and we never could get past that point in our discussions about the trials and responsibilities of emigration to another country.

Part of immigration policy is analogous to controlling crowds at a train

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station by posting the schedule of departures and the destination of the train, what the INS calls getting the message "back to the villages." From the perspective of the Soviet village, the deal being offered resembles an all-expenses-paid vacation to Disneyland. Immigration, even with the freebies, is no picnic, and anyone who does not think beyond the "good life" and 24-hour cable TV is bound for disappointment. Indeed, the prime victim of our policy may be individuals like one of my Soviet friends. He is alone, has no skills, does not speak English, and is planning to immigrate under the nominal sponsorship of a government-funded organization set up to support refugees. If his case is typical, the sponsoring organization will first hear of his existence a week or so before his arrival. His actual guarantor in the United States is the local Health and Human Services Department, an organization abysmally ill-equipped to integrate him into American life.

Congress, in consultation with the administration, allocates refugee quotas on "humanitarian grounds" pursuant to the definition of a refugee. Given the fairly inelastic nature of the supply of refugee slots, it is a real coup when an entire group receives automatic coverage, which is what Congress provided with Morrison-Lautenberg. According to the UNHCR, almost no one emigrating from the Soviet Union today would fit its definition of a refugee. I participated in a 1983 National Opinion Research Center/University of Illinois survey of mostly Jewish Soviet immigrants. Of twenty or so randomly selected people that I interviewed not one listed religious or political persecution as the reason for their decision to leave the Soviet Union. Most of my Soviet friends, many of whom arrived in the last three years, agree—in private—that, for the majority of Soviets, persecution plays little or no role in their decision to leave.

A State Department official in Moscow told me about the wave of dubious conversions among Christian evangelicals, who have never been freer to practice their faith at home. "Evangelical" is a catchall term for various Protestant groups comprising Baptists, Pentecostals, Seventh-day Adventists, and others. Past repression of religion in the Soviet Union was equally ferocious against all who would practice their faith. The severity of the repression varied directly with the enthusiasm shown by the believer in the practice of his faith. It has been observed that many evangelicals are opting to stay home where their work is most needed. For the overwhelming majority of Soviet émigrés, religion is of no importance whatever.

Anti-Semitism remains a problem in the Soviet Union as it does throughout Eastern Europe and parts of Western Europe. Jewish friends of mine who emigrated from Soviet Central Asia report experiencing no anti-Semitism at home, while those in large cities in the Russian republic are experiencing increased hostility in some circles. However, based on acts of ethnic violence and persecution, many non-Jewish groups in the Soviet Union could make a better case for blanket coverage as a persecuted minority. In the end, part of the resentment against Jews is explained by the fact that, with a few exceptions, only Jews have been allowed to leave the Soviet Union and settle in other countries. Any Soviet citizen with relatives in the West becomes a source for scarce goods from the West—another explanation for jealousy and envy.

Various programs have been put forward to privatize Soviet immigration. As opposed to steadily raising the refugee ceiling, the Reagan administration had begun to use its authority under the Public Interest Parole program to process some of the overflow from the refugee program. Like the Displaced Persons Act following World War II or the parole program used after the Hungarian Revolution, a private sponsor vouches for all costs, including medical, which the parolee might incur. The parolee also signs affidavits to the effect that he understands he is legally enjoined from receiving government assistance. He is free to work, and, in time, may apply for citizenship under the same constraints as any holder of a work visa. Self-regulating by its nature, programs such as these may be the only way to absorb those who can be absorbed. Thousands of American homes were opened for this purpose to refugees fleeing World War II and the Hungarian Revolution. Resettlement programs based on private sponsorship provide an organic link to an established community and hasten integration into the culture, language, and economy. They impart a strong impetus toward self-sufficiency by placing the costs on the sponsor and the immigrant. Processing immigrants as refugees essentially transfers the costs of resettlement from the sponsor and the immigrant to the taxpayer.

The Public Interest Parole program, however, was an Executive-branch tool used to affect policy in an area that is the responsibility of Congress. More importantly, it placed an increased financial burden on the Jewish community. Private sponsorship programs of any sort (whether linked to Morrison-Lautenberg criteria or not) have been opposed by mainline Jewish lobbies because of fear that, along with non-Jews, the number of Jews emigrating may increase and at a higher cost to boot. "We're afraid they'll all wind up on our doorstep" one lobbyist told me. (Israel's adamant opposition to any increase in Jewish emigration to the United States fits nicely with the Jewish lobby's defense of the status quo when it comes to refugee policy.)

Not only is the parole program now effectively dead because of lack of financial support, but those Soviet parolees who were accepted in earlier years have been allowed, under Morrison-Lautenberg, to requalify as refugees *after settling in the United States*. Yet, under current law, even if all costs are guaranteed by a sponsor, there is no way a private American citizen or charity can sponsor a Soviet immigrant who is outside the group covered by Morrison-Lautenberg.

At issue is not whether the United States should be spending money on humanitarian aid. At issue is whether a dollar spent in a Kurdish refugee camp has a better chance of furthering humanitarian ends than a dollar spent helping someone move to New York with an entire living room set and with plans to return for visits at the family dacha outside Moscow.

At best Congress has set the stage for special interest group infighting for privileged admission status. At worst, refugee policy is a taxpayer-funded political tool that suggests to foreigners that passage to America is yet another

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item "for sale" from Uncle Sam.

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Dirty Secrets

by Robert G. Holland

Race-Norming Lives On

A year after the nasty secret got out of how race-norming works on the nation's most widely used job test, the establishment news herd suddenly discovered the story. There were spots on *NBC Nightly News* and the *Today Show*, a front-page story in the *Washington Post*, an editorial in the *New York Times*, and a piece by me in these very pages. It was front-page copy throughout the month of May 1991. House Democrats quickly inserted language into the then-proposed civil rights bill purporting to ban this kind of manipulation of test results (although actually doing no such thing). Whereupon a silence then descended upon the Big Media. For all most Americans knew, race-norming was a quirky practice that, once discovered, was quickly terminated.

Pssst! Race-norming just continues to roll along with no restraint in sight. Having published on July 24, 1990, an official notice of intent to suspend its race-normed General Aptitude Test Battery within ninety days, the U.S. Labor Department fifteen months later seemed to have placed the GATB in a state of permanently proposed suspension—a limbo allowing state employment services and thousands of major corporations to continue to hand out phony scores to millions of hapless job seekers. And even with the recently enacted civil rights bill, statements of legislative intent that congressional staffs have salted away in the fine print of committee documents make it highly likely that regulators and judges will find race-norming to be an imperative for hiring by the racial numbers. The legislative history states that if a job test has "disparate impact" on protected minorities (that is, if passing rates are unequal), it will fail to meet the "business necessity" criterion of the civil rights bill. In such circumstances, employers must either trash the test or resort to race-norming (or similar subterfuge). Actually, they would rely on Big Brother to continue to do the dirty work for them, because the bogus ban places no restraint on government employment services.

Paradoxically, President Bush has railed against the quotas the civil rights bill would foster, but he has ignored this smoking gun of quota-mongering in his own bureaucracy. Perhaps he is hoarding this issue to spring during the 1992 presidential campaign on the assumption that voters, not without reason, will blame the party of Ted Kennedy for the scam.

Why is race-norming the subject of such little reporting or critical examination? The reason may be that so many large newsrooms are also becoming the products of strict quota hiring. Or perhaps the self-censoring influence of political correctness has captured news reporting. Whatever the reason, it is clear that not all dirty secrets about employment discrimination are equally titillating to the gods of the liberal media or to the Beltway cognoscenti; nor do those presumed opinion leaders deem all such revelations worthy of exposure to the disinfecting sunshine of full disclosure.

Meanwhile, segregated scoring of job tests according to an illiberal presumption of settled racial inferiority is not an unsubstantiated secret. The GATB race-norming also happens to be about ten years old; it traces to the final days of the Carter administration when the focus of affirmative action was changed from equal opportunity to equal results. Moreover, race-norming does not affect just a few individuals. Indeed, Scripps Howard political reporter Peter Brown reports in his book *Minority Party* that roughly sixteen million unsuspecting Americans received race-normed GATB scores during the 1980's. An even larger number were handed racially rigged marks on tests administered by corporate Carterites.

The way the scam works sounds like something out of South Africa's playbook of separate development: test takers are scored against norm groups composed solely of members of their own racial or ethnic designations, the purpose being to compensate for the tendency of blacks and Hispanics as a whole to score lower than Asians and whites on such tests. This paternalistic scheme assumes that individual members of designated victim groups cannot hack it on their own, and by using norming data that are 20 years old it ignores the gradual narrowing of the black-white performance gap on standardized tests. The effect of what Department of Labor bureaucrats euphemistically call "within-group" scoring is to skew the final scores wildly and preferentially. For example, if a white, an Asian, a black, and a Hispanic all apply for a mechanic's job, and all make a real score of 300, the white and the Asian will each receive an adjusted score of 44, while the Hispanic will get a 67 and the black will go to the head of the line with an 83. Those scores reflect the test taker's percentile ranking within his own racial or ethnic group, but the marks are reported as a set of grades on a college exam would be. And those are the scores, never the real marks, that the employment services report to employees and to unsuspecting test takers, many of whom are unemployed. This is a fraud, and a racist fraud at that, but evidently nothing more than unpleasant trifles to affirmative action fans in the news media and government.

The secret charts used to convert raw scores to within-group percentiles were leaked to the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* in May 1990. At the time, the Department of Labor had had its race-normed version of the GATB under seemingly permanent review since the Reagan Justice Department had lodged a reverse discrimination complaint in 1986. In 1989, the DOL obtained a friendly analysis from a politically attuned National Academy of Sciences panel, which concocted a pseudoscientific rationale for race-norming. But the outcry that erupted in Virginia upon publication of the conversion charts reached the DOL's ears, following which then-Labor Secretary Elizabeth Dole published the July 24, 1990, proposal in the *Federal Register* to suspend the GATB for a two-year retooling.

As is customary in federalia, the DOL solicited "public comment" to this proposal. From my efforts to re-

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view the responses, I have learned two lessons: (1) federal bureaucrats do not really consider these comments to be "public," and (2) bureaucracies have no more scruples about manipulating public comments to their own advantage than they do about falsifying test results.

The DOL's Employment Service waited six weeks to reply to my March 8, 1991, Freedom of Information Act request for the public comments (even though federal law requires a response within ten days). U.S. Employment Service Director Robert A. Schaerfl then refused to comply with my request because, he said, a "pre-decisional" release "would be detrimental to our decision-making process." He cited a section of federal law "intended essentially to protect the full and frank exchange, in writing, of ideas, views, and opinions necessary for the effective functioning of the government and the making of informed decisions by its officers." In other words, those public comments are the property of your incredibly efficient government, so beat it.

After the *Times-Dispatch* twice appealed the FOIA rejection, Schaerfl relented on June 18 ("pre-decisional" having taken on the look of a permanent condition by then). But now there was a catch: the DOL wanted $465 for copies of these precious documents. That is not a chunk of money that a newspaper gladly parts with during an advertising crunch, as the recession-proof bureaucracy surely understands. My newspaper filed yet another appeal, which cited explicit provisions in the FOIA for waiving or reducing such fees when disclosure would contribute to public understanding of government activities. Schaerfl's response was a beauty: "Because this system has been publicized extensively by the news media including your newspaper" there is nothing more to be learned. So, again, beat it, pest. Finally, my bosses, bless 'em, forked over the money, and a 25-pound box of public documents arrived at my office seven months after the information had been requested.

Schaerfl was wrong. The 1,700 responses from business, labor organizations, and other parties teach volumes about how government operates. The first point that becomes obvious from a reading of the record is that the "public comments" are hardly vox populi. Anxious to preserve their scam, job services in several states produced letters opposing the suspension of race-norming that corporate personnel (or "human resource") officers had only to sign. One union apprenticeship program in Rochester, New York, cranked out 83 identical letters on its own. Two dozen Oklahoma businesses separately signed a letter making this mangled statement: "The decision to suspend its use will adversely impact any employer's ability to hire the best employees they can." Hundreds of letters were the obvious product of *internal* campaigns to make the testing scam seem indispensable, and yet they all counted in the DOL's tabulations of "public comment."

There were a few dissenting voices. For example, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith wrote: "Segregating the GATB test scores merely extends racial and ethnic divisions without targeting or remedying the source of the discrimination, and without providing any meaningful or long-term assistance to minority applicants." And Evan J. Kemp Jr., Clarence Thomas' successor at the EEOC, checked in with strong criticism of race-norming. Such responses were buried, however, in an avalanche of solicited letters. "Apparently the guys and gals at the Job Service would like to save their paper-shuffling jobs," a manager of a small North Dakota business commented sardonically.

Not many corporate officials were brave enough to sass the federal establishment. Indeed, the response to race-norming says something about how government is corrupting the soul of corporate America and diluting its commitment to merit hiring and quality of product. The DOL did not give its clients the option of continuing the GATB (a test that is considered a rather reliable predictor of job success) and scoring all test takers the same way. The choice was between no testing or a race-normed test.

To be sure, the quotacrats have made it exceedingly difficult for major employers to resist race-norming. The Supreme Court's 1971 Griggs decision turned up the heat on businesses by buying into the civil rights lobby's argument that it is only necessary to show that a practice has "adverse impact" on minorities, even absent any discriminatory intent, to make a prima facie case of employment discrimination. The 1989 Wards Cove decision restored to employees some discretion to use merit-based hiring practices and shifted to plaintiffs the burden of proving discrimination had actually occurred. But that is one of the Reagan Court decisions congressional liberals sought to reverse with a new civil rights bill.

Then there is all that the bureaucrats have done to kill merit hiring. During the Nixon administration, the Office of Federal Contract Compliance announced that employee selection procedure must result in proportional representation for all protected minority groups; if not, a company had to validate each test it used. Since that can cost anywhere from fifty to two hundred thousand dollars or more per test without providing any warranty against costly discrimination litigation, many companies, "not wishing to lose the strong economic advantages of testing, found the sure bet of race-norming the more practical alternative," Eliot Long, vice-president of Wonderlic Personnel Test, Inc., has noted. Wonderlic offers businesses a

LIBERAL ARTS

THE EUROPEAN AMERICANS CLUB

Students at Anaheim High School in California organized a European Americans Club last fall because of what they saw as "a need for a forum to learn about European cultures." It is reportedly the first such club of its kind, and the club is now listed among other ethnic organizations including the Asian Club, the Black Student Union, and a club for Southwest American Chicanos. According to Jay Mathews of the *Washington Post*, some critics have called the organization a "Whites Only Club" and a manifestation of white supremacism, when in fact half of the club's participants are of non-European descent. William Simmons, an anthropologist at the University of California-Berkeley, attributes the desire for such a forum at the predominantly Hispanic high school to a heightened sense of ethnic identity and the perception of minority status among non-Hispanic whites.

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GATB-like "ethnic conversion table" with its widely used personnel test. The Illinois-based testing company opposes any move to prohibit race-norming.

Pragmatism is one thing, but corporate personnel offices also have adopted the doubletalk of the bureaucracy. Panning any use of test results that have *not* been race-normed, an official of Campbell Soup Company of Omaha opposed suspension of race-norming because he did not believe the Labor Department "should dictate social policy at the expense of workplace productivity." Huh? A packaging company hailed the test-rigging for providing "a more representative sampling with regard to race." And the manager of a Ford assembly plant near Atlanta marveled because race-norming provided him applicant pool test-score percentages exactly as follows: white male, 31; black male, 42; white female, 5; black female, 24; Asian, 9; and Hispanic, 2. Egads. That adds up to 113 percent, and the Asians and Hispanics appear to have lost their sexual identities.

The larger question race-norming raises is whether any shred of honesty remains in Big Government, Big Business, or Big Media.

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A Reactionary Revolution

by Ian Crowther

The Distributist Critique of Welfare

In recent years conservative thinkers and politicians in Britain and America have mounted a powerful critique of welfare statism and of the "dependency culture" that it creates. A similar though more radical critique of the nascent social state was made by a group of British dissident intellectuals before and after the First World War. It is true that, by and large, the Conservative Party during this period was also opposed to interventionist legislation as a means of improving society. But their opposition was tactical and spontaneous in character, and it is difficult to derive from it any systematically worked-out alternative to collectivism, unless it be the unreformed capitalism of 19th-century England. Much more interesting, and more relevant today, than the campaign waged by Tories against the "New Liberalism" inside Parliament was the campaign waged outside it by a group that eventually came to be known as the Distributists. The sociopolitical philosophy that gave this movement its name and inspiration was first formulated by Hilaire Belloc in his book *The Servile State*, published in 1912. Belloc advocated the "distributive state" in which a "determining number" of citizens "should severally own the means of production." However, it wasn't until 1926 that Belloc, G.K. Chesterton, and a number of others founded The Distributionist League in an attempt to put the ideas they had previously expressed into practice as well as print.

Distributist no less than collectivist ideas had their genesis in the "social question," which first gained prominence in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. The investigations of Charles Booth into conditions in London and of Seerbohm Rowntree into conditions in York revealed that as much as a third of the population of these cities were living in destitution. These studies, thick with grim statistics of ill health and stunted growth among urban working-class families, correlated with army recruitment figures showing that some 40 percent of Boer War military recruits had been rejected as unfit. At a time when Germany was seen as the main threat to Britain's imperial and industrial supremacy, these revelations excited not just compassion but the fear that the Island Empire was imperiled by the physical deterioration of its people. Germany was a model as well as a threat. It was Bismarck's Prussia, after all, which had pioneered social reforms in the shape of national insurance and mass education.

Fueled by a mixture of motives, from the purely compassionate to the impurely politic, England's social reform movement in the early years of this century had a powerful head of steam behind it. First came old-age pensions and the establishment of labor exchanges. Then in 1911 there was the National Insurance Act, which effectively laid the foundations of Britain's welfare state. It was while David Lloyd George's insurance bill was still being debated in the House of Commons that Hilaire Belloc put the finishing touches to his prophetic work, *The Servile State*; prophetic, because it correctly foresaw that reformist legislation would have as its result a state in which the masses would be "permanently dispossessed of the means of production."

Belloc viewed the nascent collectivist state of his time as engaged in a process of institutionalizing, by making tolerable, the proletarian condition to which so many had been reduced since the Industrial Revolution by large-scale capitalism. So apparently inured were social reformers at the beginning of this century to the circumstances of dependence in which masses of people found themselves, it never occurred to them that the circumstances themselves might be altered, instead of only some of the worst consequences arising out of them. It was considered impractical by the great and the good, when the matter was considered at all, to return to the sort of society in which men are either independent producers or at least exercise some control over their productive lives. The scale of modern production and organization, it was automatically assumed, rendered any such thoughts utopian, not to say reactionary. Henceforward, the dispossessed could look to the state for relief from poverty and insecurity, but not for the restoration of those liberties and responsibilities that are proper to free men. Regimentation was to replace exploitation. The working class were to be better fed, clothed, educated, and housed—but all after a pattern dictated by their "betters," namely the political mandarins recruited to run the new social state that, Leviathan-like, was to spread its tentacles into every corner of 20th-century life.

The mounting variety and complexity of welfare legislation bred a new class of administrative experts, whose Olympian pretensions were encapsulated in Karl Mannheim's 1929 definition of them as a "disinterested elite." From the start these experts were "end of ideology" types inspired less by visions of equality than of efficiency.

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Their ideal of the bureaucratic state as the agent of human progress and enlightenment received its rationale in the writings of the Webbs, Bernard Shaw, and H.G. Wells, all of whom preached varieties of that secular religion known as scientism, which amounts to the naive belief that man's behavior can be modified and improved by scientific design, just as nature has been similarly modified and made answerable to our needs. Once the belief in scientific reason is accepted and absorbed by a ruling class, the possibilities for manipulating man—in the interests of some presumed good, be it health, prosperity, efficiency, or social adjustment—become limitless. Under "the new sort of Business Government," predicted Chesterton, "there will be no eccentricity; no humour; no noble disdain of the world. There will be nothing but a loathsome thing called Social Service." The trouble with behavior manipulators is that they are Manichees; they do not love humanity as it is: Chesterton's "old beer-drinking, creed-making, fighting, failing, sensual, respectable man." Indeed, they are drawn to social reform precisely by the opportunities it affords to alter man for the better. So the one test they do not apply to any of their blueprints for social betterment is the simple test of human happiness, for they do not know what it is.

If misanthropy rather than philanthropy was the motive force behind much social reform, nowhere has this been more evident than in the eugenics movement, with its obvious distaste for man as he is as opposed to man as he should be. The tyranny of high-minded bureaucrats, Chesterton and Belloc believed, was bound to grow as the frontiers of organized welfare were pushed ever forward to accommodate, not only humdrum matters of pensions and pay, but also the whole question of a healthy nation. The progressive establishment increasingly came to think of itself as empowered, by its superior knowledge and insights, to interfere in other people's domestic lives and arrangements. There thus developed the ruling ideology of what Wells admiringly termed "The Great State" in which social evils would not merely be eradicated but would be prevented from occurring in the first place. This would necessitate the doctor, in Wells's words, becoming "the health adviser of the community." Out of this ideology came the Mental Deficiency Act of 1913, authorizing the incarceration for life of any person deemed mad by two doctors. A government that was at the disposal of such enlightened experts as eugenicists and health faddists, was itself ungovernable. To Chesterton it was plain that it had lost all sense of proportion. It had lost all sight of that ancient principle of "subsidiarity," by which power is delegated downwards not arrogated upwards. Instead, "The Great State" was claiming the right to take full responsibility for society, and this on the basis that human beings cannot take such responsibility themselves, since, poor things, they are the helpless victims of heredity or environment. Science, not content with the laboratory as a field for its experiments, was now taking the whole of society for its domain.

Implicit in all manner of social reforms, of which eugenics was only the most extreme as well as the most evil, was the assumption that ordinary, individual human beings could not safely be left to run their own lives; they needed constant supervision. The new social state increasingly came to usurp the functions of the family—in health, housing, education, and numberless other matters. But it was not only by policies of collective regimentation that people were made less and less conscious of their responsibilities to families and neighborhoods; it was also by policies of individual liberation. Moreover, the personal license "permitted" and propagated by the new clerisy, since it had the effect of atomizing families and communities, made people easier, not harder, to control. Which is why the one form of freedom tolerated by enlightened despots is sexual freedom. As Chesterton explained:

> They are trying to break the vow of the knight as they broke the vow of the monk. They recognise the vow as the vital antithesis to servile status; the alternative and therefore the antagonist. Marriage makes a small state within the state, which resists all such regimentation. That bond breaks all other bonds; that law is found stronger than all later and lesser laws. They desire the democracy to be sexually fluid, because the making of small nuclei is like the making of small nations. Like small nations, they are a nuisance to the mind of imperial scope. In short, what they fear, in the most literal sense, is home rule.

Testimony to this diagnosis is the fact that a permissive moral climate serves the cause of collectivism by swelling the ranks of those in need through the addition of categories previously underrepresented, notably single mothers, abandoned wives, and abused children. Collectivism and moral individualism have between them spawned an underclass characterized by what Chesterton called a combination of "passive functions and permissive pleasures."

Of course, the distributist critique of welfare by Chesterton, Belloc, and others went deeper than any one of these objections to its exercise in practice. It rested, finally, on their belief in private property as a principle essential to the good life and the good society. Socialists have never pretended to this principle, but capitalists have never ceased to invoke it as the very basis of a free-market economy. So in what sense was distributism really distinguishable from capitalism? Part of the answer is to be found by examining how far the rhetoric of capitalism has matched the reality. The 19th century saw a great shift taking place in the capitalist concept of property, from the personal and responsible ownership of tangible things—land, shops, factories, machinery—to the impersonal and irresponsible ownership of stocks and shares. This shift was bound to accelerate the decline of the small business and the small family firm. With the advent of the limited liability company, great corporations could be created, and great fortunes amassed, by speculation. By the beginning of this century, the company promoter had become the cynosure of society, and property his plaything.

Yet even if one grants all this—grants, in other words, that great agglomerations of capital have been allowed to grow, to the detriment of small property—it still remains true that many small enterprises have managed to survive in the Darwinian marketplace. Why, then, could distributists,

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even while deploring large-scale capitalism, not admire small-scale capitalism and call it such? Because to call the small businessmen, craftsmen, and farmers of their day capitalist would, in the distributist's view, be very misleading. It would be to tar such people with the predatory attributes that both modern economic developments and modern economic theories have made the defining features of capitalism. Distributists wished to dissociate themselves not simply from the capitalism of monopolies and trusts but also from the capitalism that would impute to every small businessman the unconquerable urge to become a big businessman. Chesterton would evidently have balked at labeling his father's modest ambitions capitalist:

> My people belonged to that rather old-fashioned English middle-class; in which a business man was still permitted to mind his own business. They had been granted no glimpse of our later and loftier vision, of that more advanced and adventurous conception of commerce, in which a business man is supposed to rival, ruin, destroy, absorb and swallow up everybody else's business.

Notwithstanding the negative associations that capitalism possessed for the distributist movement, some have since wished to rechristen the movement "popular capitalism"; and this may be a shrewd, even a legitimate, move. Both Belloc and Chesterton did at times wonder whether a better name for "existing capitalism," since it had deprived most men of capital, would be proletarianism. "Popular capitalism," in so far as it suggests that most men should own capital, is clearly not proletarianism and does therefore have much in common with distributism. A Conservative member of Parliament of my acquaintance (now, alas, dead), whose conservatism was much influenced by Catholic social doctrine and by the writings of Chesterton and Belloc, used to say that a principal aim of capitalism proper should be "the liquidation of the proletariat" through the wider distribution of property rather than state benefits.

However, distributism has an ethical as well as an economic side. The dispersion of property or ownership, as Chesterton saw it, is but "a minor application of a much more vital principle; that what should be distributed is not merely the legal power of a man over money, but the divine or mystical power of a man over matter. Man is made man, after the fact that he prays, by the fact that he ploughs, that he builds, that he cuts wood for transport or carves it for ornament; in short, by the fact that he has this mystical privilege of mastery over the material universe." All enterprises of whatever size necessarily obey an imperative to make money or a profit. But in the large enterprise this imperative will likely eclipse all others, since it is the one imperative that matters to the absentee capitalist who has only the most tangential relationship to the thing or things he owns. By contrast, in the personal ownership of productive property—whether by one individual or several—there exists an organic relation between an owner-proprietor and the object of his work: the one, so to speak, is incarnated in the other. Everyone connected with a small enterprise—even the person without any stake in it—tends to take a pride and interest in its product.

Distributism, then, though often interpreted (as much by its supporters as its opponents) as proposing solely a society of small peasant proprietors, in fact commits one to no more than the belief that small enterprises, be they industrial or agricultural, should predominate over large ones. And this prejudice in favor of concrete, personalized property over abstract, depersonalized accumulations of capital is really a very human prejudice; it arises from the same human need which is satisfied by the ownership of even the humblest house or home: the need to ensure that what John Paul II, in *Laborem Exercens*, called "the subjective dimension of the person" finds an outlet in creative fulfillment and embodiment.

Conservatives both in Britain and America are perhaps more aware today than they have been for a long time that statist attempts to promote welfare invariably end in exacerbating the very problems they set out to cure. That said, there remains an unresolved tension in conservativism as indeed there does in capitalism: between an ostensible commitment to private property and the private acquisition of wealth; a license to enjoy the one should not imply a license to enjoy the other. On the contrary, a state that truly sought to preserve and extend property would also resist and restrict vast concentrations of wealth. Few conservatives see as clearly as did Belloc the causal link between unrestrained capitalism and the welfare state. So long as masses of people are prevented by the former from possessing even a modicum of economic independence, so long will they look to the latter for the ultimate source of their well-being. Unless there exists in a democratic society sufficient numbers of people with the dignity and independence that property rights confer on them, the pressure on the provider state will grow ever more irresistible.

It is not necessary in order to ease this pressure that all those currently living on welfare handouts should be transformed overnight into small capitalists. After all, most of us—whether dependent on some form of welfare or not—are wage earners, not capitalists. But what is important is that our Western societies move towards a condition where, to use Belloc's phrase, a "determining number" of people at least own their own homes and at best have some say in their own enterprises. There is already evidence from Britain (and I believe America too) to suggest that where such a "determining number" sets the tone of a community, that community is transformed by their presence and example: by what Britain's foreign secretary, Douglas Hurd,

LIBERAL ARTS

VICE ON VICE

According to the *News Tribune* of La Salle, Illinois, last fall, motorists in nearby Sauget aided a local anti-drug organization by having their cars washed by topless nightclub dancers. Customers had to be at least 21 years old, and a tent was set up to shield the car wash from "easily-offended eyes." "Since it's going to be topless, we have to keep it to adults," explained Gary Strubelt, the nightclub supervisor who organized the event. "We don't want any mothers getting mad at us." Proceeds raised from the event were donated to Dads Against Drugs, an anti-drug organization.

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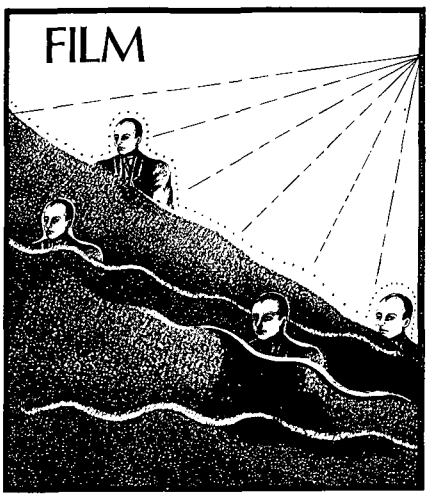
has termed "active citizenship." Passive citizenship is the product of the servile state, active of the proprietary state. Belloc did not underestimate the difficulties of moving from the one to the other: "We are attempting a radical change. We are attempting a reactionary revolution."

Ian Crowther is the literary editor for the Salisbury Review *in London.*



Endangered Species

by David R. Slavitt

Billy Bathgate
Produced by Arlene Donovan and Robert F. Coplesberry
Directed by Robert Benton
Written by Tom Stoppard
Based on the book by E.L. Doctorow
Released by Buena Vista Pictures

Advance word was that this film was troubled, which helps it, I think. With lowered expectations, one comes hoping only for an engaging Dustin Hoffman performance in a more or less predictable gangster flick. What is there interesting—never mind profound—for even E.L. Doctorow and Tom Stoppard to say about Dutch Schultz, anyway?

The gangster movie, with its long grand tradition, has given us images of James Cagney, Paul Muni, George Raft, and Edward G. Robinson that are as much a part of our national culture as Mickey Mouse or Babe Ruth. These films were often B movies on which writers and directors could operate with rather more freedom from the front office than was usual because the studio executives were busy worrying about other, more expensive projects. The spectacular rise and precipitous fall of the lawless existential hero who is glamorous, brutal perhaps, but impressively authentic amounted to a ritual that seemed to be our modern equivalent of tragedy. For the gangster's hubris, there was an inevitable punishment in which audiences shared for having dared even momentarily to admire and invest themselves in an assertion of unbridled id.

Billy Bathgate stands in the same relation to the old *film noir* gangster classics as *Shane* does to the earlier and more innocent Westerns like, say, *The Virginian*. This is a decadent piece, playing upon our familiarity with the genre and depending on our nostalgia for its exhausted conventions. In *Shane*, or *The Shootist*, the Western gunfighter was a relict, obsolescent if not obsolete, and the message was that a philosophical frontier had closed. This diminution of a moral landscape was figured in the change of light and air in these Westerns, and when the gunfighter rides off to disappear into the heartbreakingly beautiful landscape, and when Brandon de Wilde cries out, "Come back, Shane! Come back!" it is impossible for that cry not to resonate in our own heads and hearts.

The rise of Dutch Schultz is merely assumed in *Billy Bathgate*. It is his fall we witness, and this through the eyes of the ambitious kid from Bathgate Avenue, Loren Dean's Billy, who functions here as Brandon de Wilde did in *Shane*. It is through Billy's eyes that we watch the death throes of Schultz, and, without pushing matters too much, the end of individualism and authenticity.

Brian de Palma's *Scarface* was camp, a send-up as much as an homage to Howard Hawks's earlier film. With Al Pacino, what de Palma devised was an extravagant display of the pornography of violence. Violence is, indeed, a part of the genre, but usually more punctuation than text. In *Billy Bathgate* Stoppard and director Robert Benton contrive a nostalgia for the old days, for their flamboyant gangsters, and for Schultz. Hoffman is quite wonderful as the Dutchman, almost poignant in his limitations and the failures of his ambition. He wears expensive suits but manages never to look quite right in them. He uses highfalutin words that he gets inevitably wrong, confusing, for example, "prodigy" with "protégé." His diction is grandiose: "What does a man have to do to be deserving of a break, to reap the fruits of his labor?" He is an extinct species but doesn't realize it. Neither does Billy, at least at the beginning, and the machinery of the film involves the younger man's gradual understanding that Schultz's way of life is not merely wrong (a category that doesn't apply here) but, in terms of social Darwinism, gone. Crooked politicians one has bought and paid for get scared and turn unreliable. Ambitious lawyers like Tom Dewey gather like vultures and make life difficult. And larger, more vicious predators like Lucky Luciano come out of the underbrush to change the ecology irretrievably.

Schultz can erupt, pull out a gun, and blast people who, through their disloyalty or greed, have deserved harsh treatment. He can also, when driven to it by circumstances beyond his control, inflict pain on the innocent—even on Billy, at one point. Needing a plausible explanation for the blood in his hotel room (he's just shot an insubordinate associate), he has his goons bloody Billy's nose and hold the young man down so that his blood pours out to mix with the gore in the carpet. But Schultz doesn't enjoy this kind of thing. It comes with the territory, is part of the business.

Billy, an apprentice in this criminal enterprise, is a smart kid, tough, graceful, and, perhaps most important, lucky. He wangles his way into the Dutchman's numbers-racket headquarters in as nice a piece of film business as one could want, watching from across the street as runners with brown paper bags come up to the door, hold up their bags with some share of the take, and are admitted. Billy then shows up with such a bag, holds it up as he has seen the others do, and is ushered inside. There, instead of money, it turns out that his bag has only . . . cupcakes!

Will they beat him up? Kill him? Schultz comes out, busy with the pres-

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sure of details of his complicated empire and, without any particular thought, takes one of the cupcakes, which are his favorite kind. The kid is safe. It's so contrived and old-fashioned as to be sweet, and that sweetness is just what Stoppard and Benton are aiming for. Schultz's business manager, Otto Berman (Steven Hill, the rumpled old character actor who is brilliant here), looks up, adjusts his cigar stub, and remarks on Billy's luck.

Ah, but is it good luck or bad? When Dutch goes down, as we know he will, what will happen to the kid? This is the peculiar question that serves as the backbone of the film, ordering the incidents and giving them their odd moral spin. At the very opening of the picture, before the main title, we see Dutch and his henchmen hustle Bo Weinberg (Bruce Willis) and his girlfriend, Drew Preston (Nicole Kidman from *Dead Calm*), aboard a tugboat. It is night. There is fog over the water. Billy jumps across the widening swath of black water to land on the afterdeck of the tug. We cut to the cabin where Weinberg is sitting like a cartoon victim, his hands bound and his feet encased in a tub of hardening cement. We know that he is in deep trouble, but what is the kid doing there? How can he be the witness to a gangland hit like this and not be in danger, himself? At first, we are led to think he's a friend of Weinberg's and has perhaps come to try to save him, but it seems that Schultz knows the kid too. Billy has a peculiar privilege here, and his, we may safely guess, is to be the vantage point for the entire movie.

It works out, in these terms, to a more or less satisfying conclusion. Weinberg, as we discover, has asked Billy to look after the woman and protect her. This is a not-yet-drowned man clutching at moral and imaginative straws, but Billy makes the promise, giving his word, which he is innocent enough to take seriously. How can this very junior go-fer do anything to protect the tough-as-nails woman who, it turns out, is the spoiled, bored wife of a rich, gay husband and is out looking for kicks with tough guys whose style, and whose lives of risk, she finds exciting and attractive? A kind of existentialist groupie, she explains to Billy that she isn't Dutch's girl but, on the contrary, Dutch is her gangster.

Billy's apprenticeship is relatively innocuous. He is never required to do anything illegal or even unpleasant. His duties mostly involve taking care of Mrs. Preston, posing improbably as her ward, and keeping her company at Saratoga where Dutch sends her so that her presence will not compromise his public relations campaign in an upstate New York hick town where he's gone to try to get a better shake from a naive jury on his tax-evasion case. Not surprisingly, Mrs. Preston turns out to be a difficult woman to handle—for Dutch and for Billy, too. It isn't long before we see her walking through woods, and then swimming naked in a mountain pool at the base of a waterfall. This is for Billy's benefit, of course—she wants to seduce him, to get back at Dutch. Billy understands that this is maybe not such a good idea and involves a degree of risk, but he's young and lucky, and we know he will go for it and her.

His promise to the late Mr. Weinberg now carries another kind of weight, and with some real interest we watch the pieces fall into place. The hit that has to come is at last set in motion, and the thugs in their distinctive haberdashery are on the move. Billy at the track at Saratoga has to think fast, take long-odds chances, and at least make an effort, however desperate. This is the American way—which is an extravagant claim, but one the movie is more or less insistently trying to put forward.

What complicates the moral calculation of the film is that Billy, having allowed himself to be seduced by Mrs. Preston, has betrayed the Dutchman. According to the rules of the game he has volunteered to play, he deserves punishment. That he escapes is a matter of pure luck, as the shrewd and calculating Otto Berman observes. The Dutchman is on his last legs, beleaguered and harried. As Otto makes clear, "He was the king back then. You've never seen the real Dutch Schultz." Billy winds up with an envelope full of thousand dollar bills, which he uses to talk his way out of a last impossible predicament with Luciano. He even gets to keep the money!

It is a happy ending, according to all the reasonable conventions of movie-making. And yet we are troubled. If it is only luck, then Billy's streak will end. And if Billy is us, is America's paragon, what does that say about our national destiny? Schultz is unattractive in many ways, crude and violent, but . . . honest. He isn't a hypocrite. He admits what he is, while Billy never does. Billy's "innocence" is a matter mostly of physiognomy, a trick of the light in which ignorance can seem blessed. Drew Preston is fascinated with Schultz but is unfaithful to him, in part because it is in her character, and in part because she is playing a game and is curious to see whether she can get away with it. She seizes upon Billy because he is at hand and attractive enough. But he is not serious. He is a toy, and we know this. Even Billy may suspect it, but he is willing to take what she offers without asking questions.

Indeed, there is a point Stoppard and Benton are intent on making about the questions Billy asks. Otto, Billy's reluctant mentor, shifts that cigar stub, shakes his head, and says, "You wanna stay in the crime business, kid, you gotta stop asking all these questions." Billy does ask a great many questions, but they are always irrelevant and unimportant. As he admits to Mrs. Preston, at the start of their affair, "I used to calculate the odds, but I've lost my wits, I've lost my place . . ."

That's what she likes about him. It is what we are supposed to like, and can toy with for a while. But the choice Doctorow's novel and this film version of it pose, between intelligent villains and lucky fools, is not an easy one, and at Dutch's death we are left feeling bereft and diminished. Stuck with Billy Bathgate, we are elated, giddy, but not altogether sanguine about our personal and national prospects.

David R. Slavitt is a poet and novelist living in Philadelphia.

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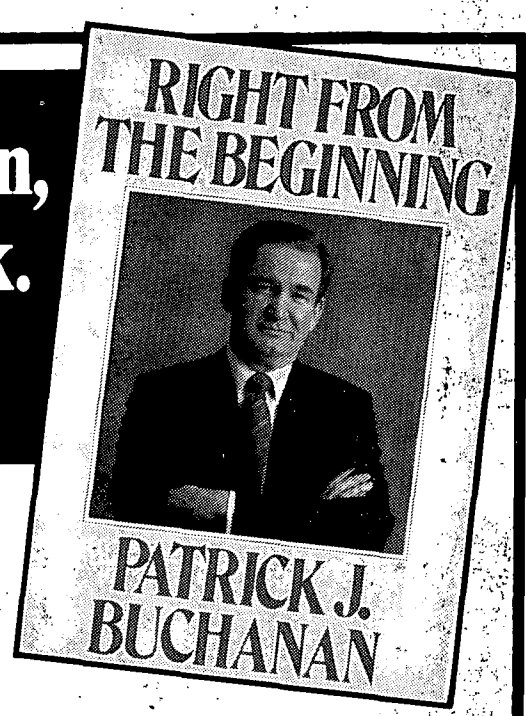

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